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Russell's Second Paradox

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Watercolour entitled “Denoting Colours” by Harm Boukema

Printed and bound by Ipskamp Drukkers, Enschede

ISBN: 978-90-9025356-5

Russell's Second Paradox

A Dialectical Analysis of 'On Denoting'

Een wetenschappelijke proeve op het gebied van de Filosofie

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen
op gezag van de rector magnificus prof. mr. S.C.J.J. Kortmann,
volgens besluit van het college van decanen
in het openbaar te verdedigen op donderdag 1 juli 2010
om 15.30 uur precies

door
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geboren op 23 juni 1945
te Delft

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Russell's Second Paradox

A Dialectical Analysis of 'On Denoting'

An academic essay in Philosophy

Doctoral Thesis

To obtain the degree of doctor
from Radboud University Nijmegen
on the authority of the Rector Magnificus, prof. dr. S.C.J.J. Kortmann,
according to the decision of the Council of Deans
to be defended in public on Thursday, July 1st 2010
at 3.30 hours p.m.

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In memory of Jan Hollak

But the greatest men who have been philosophers have felt the need both of science and of mysticism: the attempt to harmonize the two was what made their life, and what always must, for all its arduous uncertainty, make philosophy, to some minds, a greater thing than either science or religion.

Bertrand Russell

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Abbreviations

In the following list of abbreviations the unusual ones are marked by scare quotes.

"AEA"	"Any Entity Argument", i.e., possible version of the 'Gray's Elegy Argument' as applied to the most important of all denoting concepts, namely "any entity".
"AMA"	"Any Man Argument", i.e., the same argument as applied to Russell's very first example: "any man".
GEA	"Gray's Elegy Argument", i.e., the argument put forward in "On Denoting", paragraph 18-25.
"KFA"	"King of France Argument", i.e., the argument put forward against Meinong and Frege in "On Denoting", paragraph 9-13 and 17.
OD	"On Denoting". See bibliography Russell, B. (1905d). A copy of the original version is attached. The paragraphs are numbered. This numbering is used in order to refer to the text. According to the convention introduced by Blackburn & Code (1978), the GEA's paragraphs are marked as A, up to and including H.
OF	"On Fundamentals". See bibliography Russell, B. (1905c).
POM	"The Principles of Mathematics". See bibliography Russell, B. (1903a).
ToD	Theory of Descriptions.

Connection behind the abbreviations

The article *On Denoting* (OD) was published in October 1905. It is famous, because in it, Russell presented, for the first time, an important and beloved theory, later called the *Theory of Descriptions* (ToD). In OD the then nameless theory appears as a second view on denoting. The classical text in which Russell's first view, his theory of denoting concepts, can be found is: *The Principles of Mathematics* (POM). It appeared two years earlier, in 1903.

Both the old and the new theory can be divided into two parts: the part concerning indefinite descriptions, or “ambiguously denoting phrases”, such as “all men”, “every man”, “any man”, “some man” or “a man”, and the part concerning definite descriptions or “unambiguously denoting phrases”, such as “the man who discovered that the planet Jupiter has moons”.

In the old theory, most attention is paid to the former part, especially to denoting phrases containing the word “any”. The denoting concept “any entity” is assumed to be more fundamental than the notion of the variable. In the ToD, however, most attention is paid to the latter part. The only two critical arguments contained in OD are concerned with the explanation of phrases containing *the*.

The most famous and eye-catching argument in OD is the argument starting with the discussion of propositions in whose verbal expression a vacuous denoting phrase like “the present King of France” occurs. That is why I have called it the *King of France Argument* (KFA). In it, the views of Meinong and Frege, being two possible variants of the old theory, are subjected to criticism. On account of Russell's later autobiographical remarks, it has been generally supposed that the KFA reveals the genesis of the ToD.

OD also contains another argument against the old theory of denoting. It does not regard the Meinongian issue of non-being, but the question of how the meaning of an unambiguously denoting phrase can occur as subject of a proposition. The most striking example discussed in this rather obscure part of OD is: “the first line of Gray's Elegy”. That is why this argument is usually called the *Gray's Elegy Argument* (GEA). The present thesis is mainly focussed on the exegesis of the GEA.

In 1980 Russell's manuscript, entitled *On Fundamentals* (OF), was dug up. It was written in the summer of 1905, some months before Russell composed and published OD. Nothing corresponding to the KFA can be found in OF. But it actually contains a passage similar to the GEA. However, that passage also significantly differs from the GEA on account of its being not only concerned with definite, but with indefinite descriptions as well. Russell starts with considering the phrase “any man”. That is why I have called the argument in

OF the *Any Man Argument* (AMA).

In the course of that passage Russell makes a shift from “any man” towards unambiguously denoting phrases like “the centre of mass of the Solar System”. Afterwards, the ToD is conceived as the result of an attempt to avoid the problem with respect to such phrases. The same procedure is also applied to indefinite descriptions like “every man”, “any man”, or “some man”. But in the ToD the variable happens to play a pivotal role. Therefore, as long as no new theory of the variable is available, the viability of the ToD is thwarted by what I have called the *Any Entity Argument* (AEA).

Introduction

0.1 History of philosophy: an academic creed

Philosophy is much less harmless than might be supposed from a conventional academic point of view. It is not just a ping-pong game with ingenious arguments. Its aim is neither to provide shelter to those who do not dare to think for themselves, nor to provide professional researchers with material. Philosophy is an art, the art of original, passionate, personal, critical, unconventional and consistent thinking. Great things have been and certainly will be accomplished in it by great, inspired and inspiring spirits.

At least partly, the academic discipline called ‘history of philosophy’ has to do with them. If these great thinkers were impeccable saints, their works would be Holy Scriptures. In dealing with them, the historian of philosophy would be in the rather humble position of a scribe or mullah. But however great the great philosophers may be, they actually happen to contradict each other. This, I think, is the hardest and most elementary matter of fact the historian of philosophy is faced with.

How is this fact to be construed? According to me, the right answer is, that *although great philosophers contradict each other, in so far as they are great and inspired, they cannot contradict, but only complement each other*. This view is general in the sense that it does not bear on the specific subject matter of this book, but only on its being an essay in the history of philosophy. Nevertheless, it is not general as far as it is a very specific, unorthodox view on history of philosophy in general. I quite fully realize that my colleagues will not generally accept it. That is why, before going into more detail, I want to discuss it as a kind of introduction to my introduction. In doing so, I do not claim to prove it or to change the mind of my readers, but only to clarify, by means of a personal confession, the uncommon nature of the attempt made in this study.

My statement is not meant to reduce in any way the number of philosophers who deserve to be called great. To that extent, the use of the somewhat scholastic phrase “in so far” could be misleading. For the attitude assumed by Neo-Thomists may be seen as an uninhibited and clear-cut example of what I am opposed to. They supposed the really great philosophers to belong to a more or less well-defined trend or tradition within the history of Western thought: the *philosophia perennis*, as they used to call it. According to them, only its exponents are inspired by the Holy Spirit; all other so-called great philosophers are either uninspired or inspired by another, wicked or even Diabolic Spirit.

Of course, Neo-Thomists hardly exist anymore, but a subdued version of their attitude is still to be found among contemporary philosophical birds of different feathers. In our age of industrialization and financial management of academic research, as a historian of philosophy too, you have to specialize. So you choose to become a scholar in the philosophy of A, or may be of A and B, provided B is not too far away from A. Your choice is prompted by admiration. Tacitly you assume A to be greater and of more importance than other so-called great philosophers. However, this does not prevent you from respectfully tolerating colleagues who happen to have chosen a patron who, in your eyes, is somewhat less admirable. For it is not your job to criticize them.

In this 'academic' view, not a single word is mentioned about the Holy Spirit or about the ideal of combining exegesis with criticism. In so far, the Neo-Thomist outlook seems to be superseded. But in my opinion, there actually is a hidden kinship. It exists in the tacit assumption that criticism in name of the Holy Spirit leads to fundamentalism and inevitably jeopardizes the academic ideal of open-mindedness and tolerance.¹ The view I advocate is opposed to this presupposition. It may be stated as follows.

The dignity and importance of the academic discipline called history of philosophy cannot be upheld in ignoring the greatness of great philosophers. As soon as you really try to understand a famous Master of Thought, paying due attention to the historical context, he will appear greater and more interesting than you supposed him to be. This is one of the things I really believe to have experienced myself several times. But I also believe to have experienced something else, namely that what you really have learned from one great philosopher, no other one can ever take away from you. If there existed a super-human Being with complete acquaintance and loving understanding of the deepest aspirations of all great philosophers, such a Being would be able to subject each of them to the sharpest, i.e. the most disarming criticism. It would respectfully acknowledge all personal differences. And yet, provided its message were accepted, it would take away all controversy and discord. For the highest ideal of criticism is: to reject whatever is false and nothing more; and equally: to accept whatever is true and nothing more. Indeed, blunt criticism spreads discord, but it does so because it fails to be critical enough.

It is often supposed that if there is something like philosophical inspiration at all, it must be confined to unverifiable 'visions' or 'intuitions' beyond any possible criticism. For criticism is deemed to be a purely human affair. According to my view however, the ideal of criticism is just as divine and

1 Cf. Boukema, H.P. (2006).

holy as inspiration. In fact, the two are inseparable. For uninspired criticism is worthless and uncritical inspiration impossible. In this connection, it may be helpful to recall Spinoza's saying that what is true is indicative of itself and of what is false (*verum est index sui et falsi*). Nothing but truth itself can help to distinguish it self from falsity. For falsity, and especially deep-rooted falsity, is not only, as Scholastics used to say, a *privation* of truth, it also is its *simulation*. It belongs to the business of illusions to confuse themselves with truth. In so far as you live in an illusion, you are not aware of it and in so far as you become aware of it, you are getting out of it.

Consequently, it does not make sense to conceive being enlightened as a kind of degree you can get after having passed an exam. The clear-cut distinction between enlightened and unenlightened people is far too human to be of any importance to the Holy Spirit. For it does not take the slightest notion of such divisions. Having no opponents, save the illusions it gently makes aware of, it does not give license to rest on your laurels. Quite the contrary, the more enlightened you are, the more you are aware of your growing susceptibility of further enlightenment. Philosophy, therefore, is to be conceived as an ongoing process, an inspired and inspiring struggle with bad philosophy. In a world without fundamental illusions, philosophers would be just as idle as barbers in a world without hair growth.²

The fire of any great philosophy, I believe, is lighted by a personal experience of an impersonal opposition, namely the one between some wide-spread and deep-rooted assumption that goes without saying and cannot stand up to the light of day, on the one hand, and the specific truth that has to be faced in order to get rid of that assumption, on the other hand. This particular opposition constitutes the philosopher's orientation. Each great thinker has his own stumbling block and his own aspiration. In this respect, each differs from others. But being in conflict with each other cannot be due to this variety. For in principle any orientation is just as inspired and just as holy as any other. Critical spirits cannot be in conflict with each other unless they are in conflict with themselves. And they cannot be in conflict with themselves unless their self-criticism is capable of improvement.

That is why I believe that the most challenging task of the historian of philosophy is: *to understand the greatness of great philosophers and to reveal it through immanent criticism, i.e. a criticism as much as possible in accordance with their highest aspirations*. Of course, such a criticism will be contestable and capable of further improvement. However its aim is not to finish philosophical discussions, but to demolish the barriers that limit their scope and thwart their intensity.

2 Cf. Boukema, H.P. (1993).

0.2 Substantial background of Russell's development

In the present study the above-sketched union of the historical with the critical approach is applied to an important and glorious turning point in the philosophical development of Bertrand Russell, namely the one marked by the rise of the *Theory of Descriptions* (ToD), put forward in the famous article *On Denoting* (OD) in 1905. This milestone may be and has been approached from a lot of different perspectives. In this enquiry I shall focus on something specific: the opposition between the ToD's glory and its other side, the problem that triggered it. Gradually, more and more attention has been paid to that curious problem. Equally, a lot of attention has been paid to the curious fact that the later Russell ignored it. But, as far as I can see, until now no attention has been paid to the possible historical meaning of Russell's forgetfulness.

According to the view I advocate, this forgetfulness is ideological. The problem behind the ToD is more important than generally supposed, even more important than Russell was prepared to admit. It is more serious than the ToD and has seriously challenged its viability. In "forgetting" it, Russell turned away from the substantial background of his own philosophy; indeed, he turned *further* away from it. For as I shall explain below (0.3), according to my critical assessment, Russell's forgetfulness does not have any meaning in itself. It is to be construed as a completion of a larger process. His main philosophical virtue, the capacity to discover and face unsuspected problems, is closely knit with his main vice: heroically overemphasizing their external character.

From the very start Russell distinguished himself by making an attempt to be, as a philosopher, open-minded towards the sciences. More than a lot of great thinkers he displayed the ability to change his mind, to detect problems in his own views and to construct new theories.

Among the sciences Russell was concerned with in the course of his long-lasting philosophical development, one played an exceptional role. It happened to be the main science that had co-existed with Western philosophy from Thales onwards: *mathematics*. Before turning to philosophy, Russell had studied it for some years. Although he was very much disappointed by mathematics as taught in Cambridge at that time, the young philosopher remained involved in it for many years.

Very soon he devised, within the conceptual framework of the then prevailing neo-Hegelianism, his own rather ambitious philosophical programme.³ According to it, the task of theoretical philosophy is not to add new material to what the sciences are able to provide, but to put it into perspective. Each science only deals with a part or aspect of reality without being able to fathom its own limitations. Philosophy has to guard the Whole. This task cannot be accomplished, unless the a priori principles of each science are laid bare as fairly as possible. That is the Kantian element in Russell's approach. Afterwards, and that is the Hegelian element, the supposed self-sufficiency of these principles is to be disproved by means of an "inevitable dialectical contradiction", i.e., a contradiction that can only be solved at the level of a higher, less "abstract" science.

Here the Hegelian, hierarchical distinction between more or less "abstract" and more or less "concrete" appears to be of pivotal importance. For the young Russell supposed mathematics to be the most abstract of all sciences. It is concerned with discrete and continuous quantity. And quantity is farthest away from full, differentiated reality. The notion of quantity provides "a conception of diversity without any diversity of conception". According to his own programme, Russell had to treat the sciences in order, i.e., starting at the lowest level. Now, supposing mathematics to be the lowest of all sciences, he was forced, in spite of his already mentioned disappointment, to remain concerned with it in starting to elaborate his philosophical programme. In that connection he wrote, on occasion of a course provided by James Ward, a book on Kant and non-Euclidean geometry, entitled *An Essay on the Foundation of Geometry* (1897).⁴

In this book and in other writings on the same subject, Russell made loosely use of the traditional, but rather un-Hegelian notion of *substance*. He used it as a foil in order to explain why, in his opinion, geometrical space is "abstract". Points, lines and all other elements in it do not have any other being but being related to other equally purely relative elements. Everything is relative and therefore the relations cannot be real either. Without "thinghood" or "substances" relations cannot be real. Concrete relations are supported by

3 See Russell, B. (1896a) and Russell, B. (1967), p.125.

4 For early essays written in the context of Ward's course, see Russell, B. (1895). See also: Griffin, N. (2003b).

– and based on intrinsic properties of their bearers. But geometrical space is space in abstraction, without anything real in it.⁵

In 1898, Russell got by accident involved in the study of Leibniz, i.e., of a philosopher in whose logical and metaphysical system the Aristotelian notion of substance is of central importance. Leibniz purports to elaborate it more consistently than Aristotle and his scholastic followers had ever dared to do. He advocated a metaphysics of absolute individualism. Whatever seems to be shared by many individuals is relegated to the Divine Understanding. It is supposed to be only ideal, not real. There cannot be anything real *between* substances, nor anything *in* which they are. Universals, space and time are only ideal. The same applies to relations and even to plurality, for only *together* many substances are many.

This confrontation has caused in Russell the most important philosophical change he ever lived through: his so-called *revolt into pluralism*.⁶ From Leibniz he learned to abandon his former belief in “inevitable contradictions”. But he also learned that the notion of substance is incompatible with the reality of all kinds of beings, among them relations and plurality. Russell, who never had called in question their reality, concluded that it has become necessary “to base metaphysics on some notion other than that of substance”.⁷ In this way he developed a new kind of unrestricted realism, based on the notion of

5 See Russell, B. (1897), §196: pp.186-187, also Russell, B. (1896b), p.286. I disagree with the opinion of Griffin, N. (2003b): 87 that the idealist Russell, “like Bradley rejected relations”. Like almost all traditional philosophers who make use of the notion of substance, the idealist Russell believed both in real plurality and real relations. His complaint about the “abstract” character of geometrical space presupposes this belief. See e.g. Russell (1896b): 286. There he says: “... we have a space which cannot stand by itself, a thing all relations, without any kernel of ‘thinghood’ to which the relations can be attached. This forces us to attempt a resolution of the contradiction by abandoning the purely geometrical standpoint.”. In my opinion, thanks to Leibniz, Russell realized, that real relations and real plurality are incompatible with the notion of substance. That is why he banished the notion of substance in order to consistently accept real plurality and real relations. His “revolt into pluralism” is a change from inconsistent, half-hearted pluralism towards radical and consistent pluralism. It equally could be described as a “revolt into ‘relationalism’”, i.e. a change from inconsistent, half-hearted acceptance of relations towards the radical doctrine of external relations. Leibniz is honoured on account of his being, at least as far as relations are concerned, more consistent than a lot of other philosophers. And after the confrontation with Leibniz, Bradley and Spinoza are honoured on account of their being, at least as far as plurality is concerned, more consistent than Leibniz.

6 See Russell, B. (1959), Chapter 5.

7 Russell, B. (1900) §71, p.126.

the proposition and on the reduction of being-in to occurring in a proposition. Whatever has being, can occur as subject of a proposition. Whether it is a person, a mountain, a river, a point, a relation, a property, a collection or a proposition, it always deserves to be called an *entity*. An entity is whatever is such, that something is true or false about it.

This revolution marked the beginning of an “intellectual honeymoon”.⁸ Russell, who never had called himself an idealist, now used this word in order to describe what he was opposed to. As far as I can see, it is quite important in this connection to realize that this so-called idealism is usually not called “idealism” but rather “conceptualism”. Russell was not primarily concerned with the reality of material, sensible things, but with the reality of universals, relations, space, time and plurality. Both traditional Aristotelian logic and traditional metaphysics are thereby challenged. They belong together. Russell’s revolt has much more to do with the so-called *philosophia perennis* than with Hegel’s semi-Platonic idealism. In this way he can be appreciated as proponent of a general revolt extending the one initiated by Copernicus, Galileo and Newton against Aristotle’s authority in the field of philosophy.⁹

Leibniz was a mathematical genius who transgressed the limits of the traditional view in cautiously accepting actual infinite plurality. For this, Bolzano and Cantor have honoured him. But this side of Leibniz did not have any impact on Russell at all. His traditional view of mathematics as the science of quantity essentially remains untouched, as appears for example from Russell (1900), §63, p.115, where he turns out to be a more scholastic philosopher than Leibniz! For he says: “But infinite number is self-contradictory; and we cannot be content with the assertion that there is an infinite number of monads.”

That is why the self-criticism occasioned by his study of Leibniz asked for further completion, which was offered by a number of mathematicians such as Weierstrass, Dedekind, Cantor, Peano and Whitehead. They raised Russell’s conviction that nineteenth-century mathematicians had achieved what neither he nor any other professional philosopher until then had accomplished: liberating mathematics from the fetters of bad traditional philosophy. The queen and servant of the sciences is not any longer to be construed as the lowest of all, nor as concerned with quantity, but as the most universal of all, essentially one with modern universal logic. Now, Russell

8 Russell, B. (1944), p.13.

9 Russell and Whitehead must have been aware of this correspondence. The title of their *Principia Mathematica* is evidently borrowed from Newton’s *Principia Mathematica Philosophiae Naturalis*.

wanted to prove this, making use of his own brand new logic and metaphysics. In this way, during and after his great revolt against idealism, he continued to be concerned with mathematics, but with much more enthusiasm and much greater philosophical modesty. In other words, as a philosopher of mathematics, he moved from a continental attitude towards an “analytical” one.¹⁰

Among those who awakened Russell from his dogmatic slumber and raised his Platonic love of mathematics, one, namely Cantor, succeeded in challenging him to a duel. What was at stake in it? Cantor had made him aware of the dogmatic character of the Aristotelian axiom of finitude. According to it, any actual definite number must be finite because an infinite plurality cannot be but indefinite and potential. Cantor laid bare the inconsistency of this view, pointing out that the number of all finite numbers is itself both definite, at least in a certain sense, and not finite. This part of the new philosophy of the infinite, perfectly well fitted into Russell’s realism and even enhanced it.

But Cantor also purported to have proven something else, namely that the finite or infinite number of elements of any set or ‘collection’ *S* is always definitely smaller than the number of the elements of the set consisting of all the subsets of *S*. This theorem is at variance with Russell’s unrestricted realism. It also seems to contradict the radical rejection, initiated by Cantor himself, of the axiom of finitude. Therefore, Russell objects as follows:

There is a greatest of all infinite numbers, which is the number of things altogether, of every sort and kind. It is obvious that there cannot be a greater number than this, because, if everything has been taken, there is nothing left to add. Cantor has a proof that there is no greatest number, and if this proof were valid, the contradictions of infinity would reappear in a sublimated form. But in this one point, the master has been guilty of a very subtle fallacy, which I hope to explain in some future work.¹¹

In his attempt, made in June 1901, to elaborate this objection, Russell hit on a particular set, allowed in his own ontology, namely the set of all sets that are not a member of themselves. The question whether this set is or is not a member of itself, constitutes the very first version of the paradox.¹² Soon, it appeared to be just one member of a whole family of ‘contradictions’.

10 The great enthusiasm of this turn is nicely expressed in Russell, B. (1901).

11 Russell, B. (1901), p.69.

12 See POM §§344-350.

Among all the problems Russell once discovered in his own theories, no one ever had such an impact on him as this one. Later he said, that he “felt about the contradictions much as an earnest Catholic must feel about wicked Popes”.¹³ It took him about a decade to conceive and develop, in cooperation with Whitehead, his solution: the *Ramified Theory of Types* put forward in *Principia*. Russell and Whitehead never supposed this rather complicated theory to be final. What is more, it did not satisfy Russell emotionally. He said: “The solution of the contradictions (....) seemed to be only possible by adopting theories which might be true, but were not beautiful.”¹⁴ Eventually this dissatisfaction contributed to Russell’s loss of his former Platonic love of mathematics.

Among all the *theories* Russell ever conceived and adopted, one has played an exceptional role, namely the above-mentioned *Theory of Descriptions*. Russell was very fond of this theory and remained faithful to it until the end of his life. According to his own account, it was the first ray of hope in the darkness caused by the paradox. For it paved the way of the reduction of his former unrestricted realism. As such it made the *Theory of Types* possible, but it was deemed to be more fundamental. The ToD’s appeal is due to its allowing unrestricted freedom of speech without unrestricted “ontological commitment”.¹⁵ We can do *as if* we speak about the present King of France and say that he does not exist without actually speaking about him. For “the present King of France” is a definite description. And according to the ToD descriptions are not names. Even if there is something answering the description, we do not by means of the description speak about it. In fact we speak about something else, may be about predicates or about whatever is real. As seen from this perspective, the rise of the ToD constitutes the third major turning point in Russell’s development. It may, of course, also be construed as the second salutary change: the Glorious Revolution, the mitigating counterpart of the unmitigated revolt into realism.

Where did this new theory come from? How did it emerge? OD does not inform its readers about this question. Nevertheless, in his autobiographical accounts Russell has suggested, that he was led to the ToD by the “desire to avoid Meinong’s unduly populous realm of being”.¹⁶

However, in 1980, the then unpublished manuscript *On Fundamentals*

13 Russell, B. (1959), p.157.

14 Ibid.

15 This expression has been introduced by Quine, W.V. (1948).

16 Russell, B. (1944), p.13. In Chapter II this saying will be extensively discussed.

(OF) was dug up. It unambiguously proves that the ToD has been conceived on occasion of a quite different kind of problem, namely the same problem as the one discussed in a very difficult and obscure passage of OD. The most eye-catching example occurring in it is the phrase “the first line of Gray’s Elegy”. That is why it usually is called the “Gray’s Elegy Argument” (GEA). It is not concerned with vacuous descriptions like “the present King of France”, but with the question how the supposed meaning or content of a description can be made the subject of a proposition. As the other side of Russell’s most famous and glorious theory, it constitutes the centre of the present enquiry.

0.3 Critical import and approach

My main contention is that the problem discussed in the GEA is much more important and interesting than usually supposed. It deserves to be called ‘Russell’s second paradox’. According to me, he forgot about it because he was a little bit too anxious to solve his famous “first” paradox. In this way he has wronged his own remarkable capacity to lay bare problems in his own theories. The problem from which the ToD actually originated is in my opinion more important and more serious than the ToD itself. In this way I try to save the regressive and problem-detecting Russell from the progressive, theory-minded one. I do so in order to pave the way towards a new, rather unorthodox approach of both paradoxes.

According to the view I advocate, the nature of both paradoxes is rooted in the manner Russell turned away from his continental background. He failed to realize that his criticism of idealism was both too severe and too soft. In this way he made his own philosophy appear much less substantial than it actually is. Together with Leibniz’s *in-esse* he rejected being-in in general. In this way Russell adopted the “*axiom of external relations*”. Relations can only be real in being *outside* their bearers. This view is based on the assumption, shared by all extremists, that there is nothing soft about extremism. Russell never realized that his criticism was at the same time too severe and too lenient. Such a union of opposite vices seems to be contradictory and therefore impossible. Nevertheless it is possible. For Russell uncritically adopted the idealist assumption that being-in cannot be conceived otherwise than in a hierarchical, oppressive way: as a one-sided link between inferior beings and their genuine superiors. The essence of the metaphysical idealism Russell was opposed to consists in the distinction between more and less genuine being and the assumption that the latter cannot be without or outside the former. Being-in completes their dependence. In the Aristotelian version of

“idealism”, accidents are supposed to have no other being than being in the substance they belong to.¹⁷ And as such, universals are supposed to have no other being than being abstracted from reality by really thinking substances.

Russell rejects being-in in order to get rid of the oppressive hierarchy. But in my opinion he could have rejected more, namely the very assumption that being-in must be oppressive. And he could have rejected less, namely only the oppressive version of being-in. Then the reciprocal, non-hierarchical form of being-in, the *unio mystica* as illustrated by Swedenborgh’s down-to earth example of *the wind in the sails and the sails in the wind* would have been allowed. Indeed, the externalist logic of Russell’s “intellectual honeymoon” lies on the borderline of mysticism. That is why it deserves to be honoured as a very interesting and fascinating thought experiment.

Similarly, Russell’s criticism of Hegelian dialectics is both too extreme and not radical enough. For he uncritically borrowed from Hegel the assumption that dialectics is essentially allied with “inevitable contradictions”. Inspired by Leibniz Russell wanted to philosophize consistently.¹⁸ Therefore, he dropped his former belief in “inevitable contradictions”. And with it, he abandoned dialectics in general. A consistent logical analysis, he assumed, must be undialectical. In this way he not only rejected the hierarchical side

17 Platonism and Aristotelianism are the two archetypal forms of idealism. They both are based on the distinction between more and less genuine beings and on the notion of being-in. The latter is used for preventing the less genuine beings from independence. But it is used in opposite directions. According to Platonic idealism the superior beings (forms) are *in* the lower, sensible things. According to the Aristotelian inversion, Platonic forms exemplified by sensible things are only *in* the latter. They are conceived as *substances*, i.e. as more genuine beings having in them the less real accidents or forms. These two archetypes may be and have been combined in all kinds of different ways. In the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, for example, besides his evident Aristotelianism, a lot of Platonic participation is involved. The same holds of Leibniz’s metaphysical system. Russell is opposed to both forms of idealism, but primarily to the Aristotelian one. He failed to see both the Platonic Leibniz and the Platonic Hegel. As perceived from his perspective, Hegel is just as much a philosopher of substance as Bradley and Spinoza. See the quotation from *My Philosophical Development* in 22.2 below. Evidently, Russell never read Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* in whose Preface the famous statement is put forward that “the true is not to be conceived as *substance*, but equally well as *subject*.” Hegel, G.W.F. (1807), p.xx (my translation).

18 Nowhere, as far as I know, does Russell discuss this change. The author of *The Philosophy of Leibniz* simply presents himself as champion of consistency! Moreover, he honours Leibniz on account of his having been more consistent than many other philosophers who made use of the notion of substance and he criticizes him on account of his having been not consistent enough.

of dialectics, but its other side as well, namely the principle of oppositions. What *seems* to be contradictory need not *be* contradictory. And what is *logically* possible need not be *evidently* possible. For logic is universal and super-human. It by far surpasses our narrow-minded expectations. In short, Russell fails to distinguish critically what I suppose to be the good and the bad side of Hegelian dialectics. He simply deemed dialectics to be bad and undialectical analysis the only possible way of sound analysis. In this way he ignored the universal logical importance of oppositions.

Indeed, Russell did so in a very specific and instructive way. But in my opinion, as such, the tenet that oppositions are not of any logical importance is not specifically Russellian at all. It is shared, as far as I can see, by all twentieth-century philosophers. For in virtue of the logical law of contraposition it can be applied in two opposite ways. Either oppositions and being-in are supposed to be real and therefore somehow outside the realm of logic and science,¹⁹ or logic is supposed to be universal and therefore oppositions and being-in are deemed to be subjective, unreal or even impossible. The former alternative is adopted by continental philosophers, the latter by adherents of the analytical movement.

I am opposed to what they share. Of course, I am not opposed to being involved in oppositions. But I am involved in being opposed to being involved in oppositions without attributing any logical importance to being-in or oppositions. That is why I have called my analysis “dialectical”. I hope to show that it is not less analytical than the form of analysis promoted by Russell.

The main division of this thesis is based on the Cartesian principle that it is advisable to start with what is most easy and evident, not with what seems to be most urgent or fascinating. Applied to the GEA, this rule results in postponing its exegesis. For in spite of their disagreements, all commentators share the opinion that the text is very difficult indeed.

That is why, in the first part of this book, I start with exploring its surroundings. In chapter I it is argued that these surroundings contain a lot of neglected evidence in favour of the view that the problem discussed in the GEA must be of great importance. There must be something behind Russell's later forgetfulness. In chapter II a sideway trip is made towards the question how much truth is contained in the official story promoted by Russell himself. Because Meinong plays an important role in it, the question is discussed in

19 Husserl was an anti-psychologist in the field of logic, maybe partly inspired by Frege. But as soon as Husserl rediscovers and elaborates the notion of intentionality as an irreducible two-sidedness, he supposes it to be an enigma more fundamental than logic.

how far Russell ever adopted a Meinongian or quasi-Meinongian view.

The second part provides what is postponed in the first one: an exegesis of the GEA and an explanation of the nature of the “rather curious difficulties” discussed in it. Chapter III is devoted to its genesis, chapter IV to the GEA itself and chapter V to its follow-up. The second part as a whole may also be construed as an attempt to discuss the role played by Frege. For I advocate the view that in this connection, i.e., on the road towards the problem, in its exposition in OD and on the road from the problem towards the ToD’s final adoption, Frege has been of much more importance to Russell than is generally supposed. Therefore, his eclipse from the official story and from later expositions of the ToD, is equally of greater importance than is generally supposed. In the concluding section Frege is taken into account in order to clarify the forgotten kinship between Russell’s paradox and the problem on whose occasion the ToD has been conceived.

PART ONE

Surrounding the Gray's Elegy Argument

Chapter I

Towards a Re-Evaluation of *On Denoting*²⁰

In his writings, Bertrand Russell exhibited three sorts of qualities rarely united in one philosopher: firstly the open-mindedness needed to detect unsuspected problems involved in his own assumptions, secondly the ingenuity to invent and try out new theories in order to cope with those problems, and lastly the willingness to communicate his findings, however sophisticated and complicated they might be, to as many fellow creatures as possible, expounding them in an accessible and popularized fashion. Both Russell himself and those who have assessed his philosophy, be it in admiration or in disdain, are prone to overlook that the possible drawbacks of the latter two virtues are liable to overshadow the importance of the first.²¹

In the reception of OD, both the inclination to overrate the importance of the possible merits or demerits of the ToD contained in it and the counteractive attempt to pay attention to the problems behind that theory, especially the one discussed in the GEA, have played an important role. No doubt, the latter pursuit has considerably widened the scholarly perspective on OD.

But –and that is my main contention –because of its reactive character, it has not been radical enough. The method I shall use to advocate this view is based on the principle that for antagonisms the converse of Berkeley's famous slogan concerning ideas holds: their *esse* is *non percipi*. Paying attention to oppositions is of psychological, historical and logical importance. It leads to a somewhat uncommon critical evaluation of OD which, more than the usual ones, is in accordance with its underlying structure, its spirit and the historical facts related to it.

Usually it is assumed that there is only one way of evaluating the GEA: going straightforwardly into its content. According to the approach I advocate, there is also a second, less travelled road which deserves to be trodden first: going *around* it. In the following exposition, I shall confine myself to the latter, postponing the detailed exegesis of the GEA to chapter IV. I shall start this

20 This chapter is a slightly revised version of Boukema, H.P. (2005).

21 Cf. Griffin, N. (1993).

roundabout by considering the history of OD's reception as far as the GEA is concerned. In the second section I shall go into OD itself, exploring the immediate textual and historical surroundings of the GEA.

1 Not paying attention to OD itself

1.1 OD's reception, first period

The above-mentioned theory-minded attitude comes pre-eminently and conspicuously to the fore in the way OD has been evaluated during the era of its glory, the period before the Second World War. It was hailed as the very first, maybe somewhat stubborn, but at any rate memorable official appearance of a marvellous theory, the ToD, which has elsewhere been expounded in a more comfortable way. The reasons why analytic philosophers such as Russell himself, the young Wittgenstein, Ramsey and Quine welcomed it as a great achievement are probably as divergent as their respective points of view. But the very fact that it could be used in such a variety of ways probably reveals one of its most remarkable features. To a considerable extent it seems to meet Leibniz's conception of divine perfection: *much by means of little*.²² Being mainly concerned with a very limited subject matter, the meaning of "the", it is capable of achieving great things.

As seen from Russell's own perspective (see Russell, B. (1959), Ch. 7), the greatest merit of the ToD seems to be that its main principle, the translation of sentences containing certain name-like expressions into sentences not containing them, enabled him to refine his former, rather tentative Theory of Types in such a way as to avoid the paradox that had afflicted him for many years. So, OD seems to mark the second great step forward, the decisive liberating move which had to be made after the sweet "intellectual honeymoon" following the sweeping "revolt into pluralism" had been spoiled by the discovery of the contradiction (see 0.2).

Of course, reverence was paid not only to the ToD itself and to its various possible applications, but just as much to the critical arguments it is based on. Although Russell, both in OD and in later expositions, put forward different arguments in favour of the ToD, one of them, the argument against Meinong (and Frege) concerning denoting phrases such as "the present King of France" was generally supposed to be the most striking and conclusive one. For the

22 Leibniz, G.W. (1684), section V, pp.430-431. It is quite remarkable, that Russell, in his book on Leibniz, does not pay any attention to this original and unconventional conception of perfection.

sake of convenience I shall call it the *King of France Argument* (KFA)

During its heydays there was hardly any interest in the ToD's historical background. Nevertheless, on different occasions, Russell made some casual remarks on its genesis. The very same consideration that appeared to be the most convincing one also happened to have led him to the ToD: "the desire to avoid Meinong's unduly populous realm of being" (Russell, B. (1944), p. 13).²³

1.2 Second period

Shortly after the Second World War, a considerable change in the intellectual climate takes place. Philosophers in the Anglo-Saxon world begin to realize that they belong to one great movement whose emergence is largely due to German speaking pioneers. The influence of the later Wittgenstein is growing, ordinary language philosophy is flourishing and some works of Frege, who, in his construal of definite descriptions had taken a stand much closer to ordinary language than the Russell of OD, are translated into English. In short, the happy years of OD's uncontested fame are gone. A new era of ideological strife is heralded by Strawson (1950).

Although this controversy is mainly concerned with the ToD, unintentionally OD itself gets more involved in it. Seven years before Strawson's attack, Church (1943), making an attempt to comprehensively safeguard Frege's distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, not only pays attention to Russell's KFA, but also to the GEA, which until then had not played any role at all. Somewhat later Carnap (1947) joins Church in his devastating criticism. Then Butler (1954) adds two new elements to the discussion: he tries to *mitigate* the attack of his predecessors in suggesting that the GEA could make some sense if construed as aimed at Russell's *own* former theory of meaning and denotation. It is enormously different from Frege's doctrine both in character and in quality, although the two are treated as "very nearly the same" in OD. Both points have had a considerable impact on the subsequent quarrels. Geach (1958) joined Butler in giving the reader of OD the advice to "ignore Russell's use of Frege's name". Cassin (1970) made an attempt to mitigate the tacit criticism implied in Geach's advice, suggesting that the GEA does not even *purport* to be a criticism of Frege, but only of Russell's own former view.

In 1970 a new revisionist trend emerges, initiated by Ayer (1971) and more

²³ In chapter II the role played by Meinong will much more extensively be discussed than in the present chapter.

thoroughly propounded by Hochberg (1976) and Blackburn & Code (1978). They all try to safeguard Russell's ToD from those humiliations, however mitigated they might be, in construing the GEA as a sound criticism of both Russell's former theory and Frege's.²⁴

1.3 Third period

Just as the beginning of the second period of OD's reception corresponds to a turning point in the general development of analytic philosophy, its self-conscious formation out of scattered materials, so does its end. About 1980, when philosophers of science are turning to the history of science, a growing number of analytic philosophers feel the need to approach the movement they belong to historically. It is, I presume, not accidental that at that very moment Russell's manuscripts were dug up, among them *On Fundamentals* (OF), which appeared to contain a lot of valuable and surprising information about the true origin of the ToD. It now appears that this theory did not, as Russell himself seems to suggest, emerge from his criticism of Meinong, but from the problem discussed in GEA. Furthermore, in the part of OF corresponding to the GEA, no mention is made of Meinong or Frege; Russell appears to be exclusively concerned with his own former theory of denoting.²⁵

Coffa (1980) first signalled these findings and others like Cartwright (1987), Hylton (1990) and Rodriguez-Consuegra (1992) have followed him. What is their conclusion like? First of all, that the revisionist view is out of date, and that, from now on, an attempt has to be made to understand OD and the GEA on the basis of its true Russellian origin. Secondly, that

24 The survey is very schematic indeed. I have deliberately simplified the developments in order to highlight significant trends. The members of one and the same movement are in fact much less united than might be supposed. For example, Blackburn & Code (1978) did not take notice of Hochberg (1976), although their approach and results are very similar. Others, like Searle (1957), continued the tradition of Church and Carnap in ignoring Russell's own former theory of denoting concepts, whose importance had been tightly emphasized by Butler (1954). Finally, some commentators take a somewhat exceptional stand. Among them is Dummett (1973), who rightly observes (at least in my opinion) that the GEA bears on Frege's notion of indirect sense and reference (see below chapter III). According to Dummett Russell is confused but has nevertheless taken notice of a real problem in Frege's theory. However, according to him, it can easily be solved by means of a correction in Frege's fashion.

25 This assumption will be challenged in the second part. See especially section 8.

Russell's official story about the genesis of the ToD is a myth. Whoever wants to understand OD has to rely on what precedes it, not on Russell's later comments.

In short, both the dazzling, somewhat too youthful and innocent enthusiasm of the first era and the stormy, more or less suppressed animosity of the second one, are replaced by a more quiet and sober-minded atmosphere inspired by the maxim that it is better to understand a philosopher against his own background than against that of the victories he supposed himself to have gained over others.

1.4 Perceiving the main opposition

The general upshot of the history of OD's assessment seems to be rather salutary. It does not consist in simply turning towards or away from Russell, but rather in turning away from the self-forgetful older one in order to save the forgotten younger one from oblivion. Thus the main and final opposition dominating this development affects the direction of view. Russell's own official, forward-looking perspective, OD as memorably containing a theory whose rendered services promise future victories, is replaced by an unofficial retrospective view: OD as reflecting its author's previous wrestling with himself.

Just like other opposites, these have, as such, something in common: they are contrary forms of looking away from OD in order to find its real essence elsewhere. As soon as this common reductionist element is recognized as such, the question whether it is worth following this path is answered as a matter of course. It goes without saying that paying attention to OD itself deserves preference. This, of course, does not mean that looking at its sources and its follow-up are to be put under a taboo. On the contrary, its charming, adolescent character cannot be revealed unless it is compared both with OF and with later expositions of the ToD. But, and that is the crucial point, if we want to know the extent to which OD does or does not agree with those other writings, one and only one reliable crown witness is to be consulted: OD itself.

However trivial and obvious this maxim may seem to be, it points in a new direction, one opposed to the two mutually opposed variants of the reductionist approach. OD is to be situated where it evidently belongs: halfway between the forgotten and the forgetful Russell. Both extremes are reflected in OD and both deserve attention, just as well as their opposition does.

1.5 The riddle of Russell's forgetfulness

Suppose the official story about the genesis of the ToD had been told not by Russell himself, but instead by some uninformed outsider. In that case, we would perhaps be entitled to turn our back to it. But in fact the protagonist himself has told the story! How could we ever entertain the slightest hope of understanding the intrigue of OD's history, unless we are prepared to dwell on Russell's words and investigate what lies behind them? We shall have to ask, firstly, what possible grain of truth is contained in them and in how far they are deceptive.

And if the story, at least to some extent, appears to be misleading, we shall have to ask a second question, namely: How is it possible that the very person who happened to be more acquainted with the true genesis of the ToD than any one else in the whole world, has led us astray? Did Russell suffer from a memory defect? There are, as far as I can see, no indications to justify such an assumption. Did he deliberately play false? If so, what could possibly have been the underlying motive for such a fraud? And if his deceptive behaviour flows from self-deception (which might be the most plausible hypothesis), then the same question must be asked. For in whatever way self-deception is construed, in Freudian or Sartrean fashion, it needs some hidden incentive. So, Russell must have had some 'reason' to banish the real origin or at least some of its features, from his conscience, in overemphasizing the importance of his being dissatisfied with "Meinong's unduly populous realm of being" and in not mentioning the problem occurring in OF at all. But what could this 'reason' possibly be? Is there anything shameful about the actual conception and birth of the ToD?

1.6 Assumptions underlying the neglect of the riddle

All these questions concerning Russell's forgetfulness are quite obvious. Nevertheless, Russell scholars have not raised them. How is that possible? If the above account of the main antagonism dominating the reception of OD is right, this fact is not as surprising as might at first sight be supposed. It is a natural outcome of the reactive turn of mind which consists in focussing on the forgotten Russell instead of the forgetful one. Indeed, his being an unreliable witness is established as a curious, maybe somewhat embarrassing fact. But the opportunity of focussing on its very curiousness and of asking for an explanation has been either overlooked or deemed to be useless.

Why so? Evidently because Russell's later account of what led him to the

ToD, is supposed to be just a wrong answer to an unambiguous multiple-choice question, whose correct solution has been determined beforehand. There seems to be no reason either to be fascinated by Russell's story or to examine it any further. Forgiving and forgetting such an evident flaw, preferably with a kind smile, in order to turn to Russell's forgotten better self seems the best way to cope with it.

Those who anxiously rely on the testimony of OF, do not, of course, suppose the GEA to be the only critical argument in OD. They are prepared to admit the occurrence of other arguments as well, such as the KFA and the one based on the principle of acquaintance.²⁶ So, there are at least two or three candidates qualifying for being nominated as *the* one that actually led Russell to the ToD. They do so in virtue of something they are supposed to have in common: purporting to undermine the old view of denoting, they are all trailblazers and somehow supporters of one and the same new theory. One and only one of them can and does have the additional quality of being the leader of this team, just as one and only one among all those men who ever walked on the moon, can be the first one who ever did so.

This conceptual scheme is based on the following assumptions:

- a) There is one and only one 'leader' because there is one and only *one way of being a 'leader'*. The past tense of the verb "lead" used in Russell's notorious saying that he was *led* to the ToD by his "desire to avoid Meinong's unduly populous realm of being", is supposed to be susceptible to one and only one interpretation: He wanted to make us believe that the said desire made him *conceive* his new theory. And that, of course, is precisely what the manuscript OF has revealed to be false.
- b) The two or three critical arguments that possibly *could* have led him to the ToD, are deemed to have, all of them, the *same logical import*. In other words, the quality of being the leader, which actually does make a difference, must, according to this view, presuppose equality of legal status. Although their actual strength and validity may be assessed differently, all candidates *purport* to do the same thing.
- c) What they actually purport to do may be construed in only two possible ways: either as merely undermining the old view on denoting and thus making room for the new one, or as both making room for it and supporting it. Consequently, the relation to the ToD is supposed to be at any rate *positive*.

26 I shall leave aside the latter one.

There is one and only one way of testing the possible validity of these assumptions: paying attention to OD itself. In the subsequent discussion, I shall try to show that actually doing so leads to the conclusion that they are all mere dogmas whose persistency is only due to the habit, established by Russell himself, of seeking OD's essence beyond it.

2 Paying attention to OD itself

2.1 OD's puzzling structure

Let us start with the question concerning the way in which the KFA occurs in OD. In the third paragraph Russell gives the following survey of the course of his argument:

I shall begin by stating the theory I intend to advocate; I shall then discuss the theories of Frege and Meinong, showing why neither of them satisfies me; then I shall give the grounds in favour of my theory; and finally I shall briefly indicate the philosophical consequences of my theory.

From these words, an uninstructed and unsuspecting reader inevitably gets the impression that the second part of OD will be devoted to criticism of theories about denoting put forward by *others*. Furthermore, such a reader will expect the purpose of criticism to be merely *destructive*. For all arguments in favour of the new theory seem to be relegated to the third part.

On closer scrutiny, however, this impression seems to be rather misleading. In the footnote linked to this passage, Russell refers to his own former theory of denoting, expounded in *The Principles of Mathematics* (POM), Ch V, saying: "The theory there advocated is very nearly the same as Frege's, and quite different from the theory to be advocated in what follows." From this we may infer that in the second section of OD, Russell not only wants to criticize the views of others, but his own former theory as well, which, *in being opposed to the ToD*, does not differ significantly from Frege's doctrine of sense (*Sinn*) and reference (*Bedeutung*).

Thus, we may correct our first impression in supposing the author of OD to have two essentially different opponents: Frege and Russell's former self on the one hand and Meinong on the other. Although this view, of course, is wrong, it nevertheless contains a kernel of truth. It reflects the fact that shortly before his discovery of the ToD, Russell had criticized Meinong and declared himself

in agreement with Frege, at least as far as the issue of possible non-existent and non-subsistent objects is concerned (see B. Russell (1905 a) and (1905 b)). In so doing, Russell had dissociated himself from POM in which both Meinongian and Fregean elements are mixed.²⁷ Actually, in OD, Frege and Meinong are grouped together not so much as the two other philosophers who happened to have put forward a theory of denoting, but rather as representing two mutually opposed views on a specific issue, namely the problem of non-being, which in some way or other seems to be connected with denoting.²⁸ Although Meinong and Frege did not take notice of each other's existence, Russell went through both their views and through the conflict between them.

Consequently, our first impression of the objective and scope of the second section of OD has to be subjected to two further corrections. In what seems to be his assessment of current theories about denoting, not just three personalities occur, but five: Frege, the quasi-Fregean Russell, Meinong, the quasi-Meinongian Russell, and finally the author of OD who is equally dissatisfied by all of them. Furthermore, this criticism appears to be confined to one specific issue only, namely the problem of non-being.

Now, assuming that all arguments purporting to undermine other theories are to be found in the second section, we seem to be entitled to expect that the KFA is the only one occurring in OD. This anticipation, however, is falsified by the fact that in the course of the third section, destined to be reserved for arguments in favour of the ToD, an additional unannounced argument occurs, namely the GEA. It contains a criticism of "the" theory of meaning and denotation, i.e., *pace* Cassin and her followers, of the theory which Frege and

27 For further discussion, see chapter II.

28 Having expounded the main difficulty in Meinong's view (OD, paragraph 11), namely that the existent present King of France has to exist in virtue of his essence, whereas in fact he does not exist, Russell wrongly suggests that Frege is able to avoid this difficulty in virtue of his distinguishing *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. What Russell must have had in mind is rather that the awkward consequence of Frege's un-Meinongian view (namely that all sentences which seem to express a proposition about a non-existent or non-subsistent object, are – at least from a logical point of view – meaningless) is mitigated by the introduction of the said distinction. For it allows such sentences to have at least a *Sinn*, namely the *Gedanke* expressed by them. According to the ToD, of course, this mitigation is not powerful enough. Cf. 23.2 below.

the Russell of POM are supposed to share.²⁹ This argument bears on an issue that is quite different from the problem of non-being, namely the question of how the supposed meaning of an unambiguously denoting phrase can be made the subject of a proposition in such a way as to “preserve” the logical, extra-linguistic relation of the meaning to the denotation. The latter requirement implies that the meaning itself must somehow be involved in its being made the subject of a proposition. That is why it might be called the *problem of reflexivity*.

2.2 The puzzle of OD’s structure solved

It has gradually become apparent that it is far from easy to see how the actual structure of OD meets the general outline sketched in its third paragraph. What is more, there is something strange and unnatural about the announced course of argument. Indeed, OD does not pretend to be a philosophical poem like Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*. What Russell wants to convey could just as well have been set out in many other ways. But, and that is the sticking point, once the decision is made to start, after a short introduction, with an exposition of the ToD itself, it seems to be rather inappropriate to continue with a purely negative criticism of existing theories. In the course of the first section (paragraph 7), Russell appears to be prepared frankly to admit that his interpretation of unambiguously denoting phrases may seem “incredible”. So, what the poor reader of *Mind* is hoping for is, of course, a reason why there is

29 The view put forward by Cassin (1970), namely that in the GEA Russell is only concerned with his *own* former theory of denoting concepts, can be refuted in two different ways. Firstly, it flatly contradicts Russell’s own saying (OD paragraph 3, footnote) that his former theory is “very nearly the same” as Frege’s theory of sense and reference. Secondly, Cassin’s view can only be upheld in assuming that in the second part of OD, the one containing the KFA, Russell is exclusively concerned with criticism of *others*, namely with Meinong and Frege. In the GEA he is supposed to change the target of his criticism. However, in the first paragraph of the GEA (OD paragraph 18) Russell says: “The relation of the meaning to the denotation involves certain rather curious difficulties, which seem in themselves sufficient to prove that the theory which leads to such difficulties must be wrong.” In my opinion, the words “in themselves sufficient to prove” are in themselves sufficient to prove that Cassin’s exegesis must be wrong. For this turn of phrase only makes sense if in the GEA Russell purports to put forward a *new* criticism of the very *same* theory which has been criticized before, namely the theory introduced in paragraph 11, the theory of what “we may call” (in the context of OD) *meaning* and *denotation* and what Frege has called *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*.

any need of such an artificial and complicated theory.

In fact Russell does not delude *that* expectation, as appears from the very first paragraph of the second section (OD, paragraph 9), which runs as follows:

The above gives a reduction of all propositions in which denoting phrases occur to forms in which no such phrases occur. Why it is imperative to effect such a reduction, the subsequent discussion will endeavour to show.

It is, I presume, not accidental that “the subsequent discussion” actually meets the increasing impatience of the reader. To do so is the main purpose of OD’s second section, the purpose marked by the word *imperative*. The reader expects a *justification* of that strange and “incredible” theory. In the KFA, i.e. in the joint criticism of Meinong and Frege, Russell purports to give such a justification. He wants to compensate for his bold decision to start with a dry exposition of his new theory.

This lies at the very root of the difficulty the reader of OD is faced with. For this purpose of OD’s second part is *not* announced in paragraph 3. In so far, Russell does *more* than he has promised. Indeed, he answers the announced question, namely why “neither of the theories of Frege and Meinong satisfy” him. But in answering that question, he also answers another, unannounced one, namely “why it is imperative to effect such a reduction”, i.e. “a reduction of all propositions in which denoting phrases occur to forms in which no such phrases occur”.

At first sight, this second question seems to be announced as pertaining to OD’s third part, in which Russell wants to give “grounds in favour” of his new theory. But on closer scrutiny, these announced grounds in favour of the ToD appear to be essentially more modest. For they are put forward within the setting of the match arranged by means of the puzzles. In paragraph 14 OD’s third part is introduced as follows:

A logical theory may be tested by its capacity for dealing with puzzles, and it is a wholesome plan, in thinking about logic, to stock the mind with as many puzzles as possible, since these serve much the same purpose as is served by experiments in physical science. I shall therefore state three puzzles which a theory as to denoting ought to be able to solve; and I shall show later that my theory solves them.

After the three puzzles have been expounded in paragraphs 15, 16 and 17, the game can be played. But it is not a game like patience. It is not played in

solitude, but in competition with an opponent, namely “the” old theory of denoting. In principle each puzzle may give the new theory an opportunity to prove its superiority. Provided the old theory fails to deal with the puzzle, whereas the new one successfully solves it, there is a “ground in favour of the latter”. In view of the score, it is sufficient to establish success or failure. There is no need of any explanation. It is sufficient if Russell happens to dispose of an argument which proves *that*, for some reason or other, the old theory is unable to solve the puzzle at stake. After having shown that his new theory is capable of avoiding the difficulties the old theory gets involved in, the score is 1-0 in favour of the former.

As seen from this perspective, criticism of the old theory is part of the game to be played in OD’s third section. For Russell wants to discuss the puzzles in order. So, he starts with puzzle (1), and more in particular with an argument which proves, that for some reason or other, the theory of meaning and denotation gets involved in unsuspected difficulties in its attempt to deal with puzzle (1). That argument is the GEA (see especially its last two paragraphs, namely 24 and 25). Therefore, the position of the GEA in OD is quite regular! Similarly, after the exposition of the GEA, Russell exactly does what he might be expected to do, namely explain how the ToD solves puzzle (1) (paragraphs 26-30).

Russell subsequently moves to the discussion of puzzle (2). But unfortunately, he only explains how the ToD successfully solves it without even mentioning the old theory. This is an irregular move indeed. It looks like cheating. But in fact puzzle (2) is out of the game. Both Meinong and Frege would claim to be capable of handling it more satisfactorily than the Russell of the ToD. Both would say that the sentences “The present King of France is bald” and “The present King of France is not bald” do not express anything true or false. Frege would say so because the phrase “the present King of France” fails to have a reference. Meinong would say so because the question concerning possible hair growth is beyond the essence of that unreal royalty. After all, accepting truth-value gaps is not always as disadvantageous as Russell suggests.

Anyhow, in the first part of OD, the part in which the ToD is expounded, Russell praises the ToD because it eliminates truth-value gaps altogether. In paragraph 8, he says:

Thus e.g. every proposition of the form ‘C (the present King of France)’ is false. This is a great advantage in the present theory. I shall show later that it is not contrary to the law of contradiction, as might be at first supposed.

Evidently, this advantage involves a new disadvantage. For if all propositions in whose verbal expressions: “the present King of France” occurs are false, then the proposition expressed by “The present King of France is bald” must be as false as the one expressed by “the present King of France is not bald”.

Russell announces to show later how the ToD is capable of solving this problem. Where is this promise fulfilled? Evidently in paragraph 31, where the ToD’s solution of puzzle (2) is explained by means of the distinction between primary and secondary occurrence. In fact, according to the ToD, not *all* propositions in whose verbal expression “the present King of France” occurs, are supposed to be false. This only applies to sentences of the form “the present King of France is P”. There the denoting phrase has a primary occurrence. Therefore, the contradictory of “the present King of France is bald”, namely “it is false that the present King of France is bald” may quite well be true.

Therefore, puzzle (2) constitutes a private problem of the incompletely expounded ToD. At the end of the above-quoted paragraph 8 Russell interrupts his exposition of the ToD. Puzzle (2) is introduced in order to enable its completion. Essentially it belongs to OD’s first part. The reason why its discussion is postponed obviously is the same as the reason why the KFA precedes the exposition of the puzzles: in order to counterbalance the growing impatience of the reader.

Suppose OD’s composition to be modified as follows. The discussion of the ToD’s refinement by means of the distinction between primary and secondary occurrence is explained immediately after paragraph 8 on occasion of puzzle (2). Furthermore, the whole KFA is placed where it belongs, immediately preceding the ToD’s solution of the puzzle of non-being. In this new arrangement, OD’s structure would be much more conspicuous. But it would have lost a lot of its charm and persuasiveness. For the proposed modification would put the whole argument into the football setting. Within the rules of the game the extra force of the KFA would not count.

What is the nature of this extra “imperative” force? Is it purely rhetorical? No, it is due to a significant difference between football and science or philosophy. In football an attempt to explain the opponent’s failures does not belong to the game itself. But in science and philosophy it does. The KFA not only purports to prove that Meinong and the un-Meinongian Frege are, for some reason or other, unable to solve puzzle (3). It also purports to explain *why* they fail: they do so because they share the presupposition whose rejection constitutes the main principle of the ToD, namely that the *denotation* acts as something the proposition is *about*. In the next subsection this point will be further explained.

According to my analysis, the riddle of OD’s puzzling structure can only

be solved if due attention is paid to the conflict between what in paragraph 3 Russell promises to do and what he actually does. In fact he does *more* than he suggests, more than just giving “reasons in favour” of his theory. In OD’s second part, he purports to explain the supposed failure of Meinong and Frege. The KFA plays a twofold role: it acts in the match set up by means of the puzzles, and it acts, in virtue of its “imperative” character as justification of the ToD. Its being discussed in a separate part of OD is only due to the latter, unannounced role it plays.

As will be more extensively explained below, the GEA is not capable of justifying the ToD. That, of course does not prove that in itself it is weaker than the KFA, but only that, in sanctioning the ToD’s adoption, it is weaker. This formal inequality does not fit into the mould of the official story, which has a great impact on the atmosphere around OD. It is hardly possible to read OD without inhaling that atmosphere. That is why the riddle of its structure can only be explained in holding one’s breath. In the previous analysis I have tried to do so.

2.3 General import of the argument against Meinong and Frege

As noticed in the previous subsection, the KFA is able to serve the purpose of the second section, because it is *meant* to be both negative and positive. How is this unity of destructive and constructive power to be conceived? Evidently, the argument purports to show not only that the theories of Meinong and Frege for some reason or other fail to give a satisfactory interpretation of sentences containing denoting phrases such as “the present King of France”, but as well to *explain why* they fail to do so, namely in virtue of their being *opposed* to the ToD.

What does “being opposed to the ToD” mean? Before the latter’s birth, nobody knew. So, we shall have to start with the question of how it deviates from its predecessors. In spite of all their differences, Frege’s theory and Russell’s old theory of denoting are both opposed to a more primitive theory of the proposition, whose main idea is that propositions contain what is essential to their identity. Consequently, if a proposition is *about* some entity, that entity must be its *constituent*.

This view leads to several difficulties. For the sake of brevity, I shall confine myself to the most familiar one. How can a proposition like the one expressed by “The author of *Waverley* is the same as the author of *Ivanhoe*” be both true and informative? Russell and Frege solved it in assuming that a proposition can be *about* something which is *not its constituent*. The content, the meaning

of the phrase “The author of *Waverley*” actually is a constituent, and it denotes something beyond the proposition itself, but nevertheless something quite essential, namely something the proposition is *about*. Thus conceived, denoting is intentionality in the extra mental world of propositions.³⁰

According to the ToD, this notion of self-transcendence is half-hearted and inconsistent. For however emphatically the externality of the denotation may have been stressed by both Frege and the Russell of POM, that cannot prevent the denotation from being of vital importance to the very essence of the proposition, namely its fitness for being true or false. So, the main idea of the ToD is, that the denotation only *seems* to be something the proposition is about, whereas in fact its relation to propositions with which it has to do, is much less intimate. The denotation is only relevant to the *actual* truth value, not to the *capacity* to be true or false.

How does this bear on the issue of non-being? The link is quite evident. According to the ToD, propositions do not have to fear the loss of their denotations. Their total absence does not injure the proposition’s fitness for having a truth value. And that casts the opposition between Meinong and Frege in a different light. Before the birth of the ToD, they seemed to represent the horns of an unavoidable dilemma: *either* assuming the *presence* of non-existent or non-subsistent objects in order to save the proposition’s *capacity* to be true or false, *or* accepting *truth value gaps* in order to fully acknowledge the *absence* of the denotation. As seen from the point of view of the ToD, these positions appear to be mutually opposed versions of one and the same avoidable presupposition, **namely that denoting phrases are “standing for genuine constituents of the propositions** in whose verbal expression they occur”. (OD, paragraph 10) Indeed, this discovery might have contributed to Russell’s *acceptance* of the ToD.³¹

2.4 OD’s ambiguous tenor (ad a)

Is this hypothesis confirmed by historical facts? At least partly. In the passage of OF, where the conception of the ToD actually takes place, neither Meinong, nor Frege, nor the problem of non-being to which they primarily owe their alliance, is mentioned at all.³² Furthermore – and the importance of this fact has often been overlooked – Russell appears to be very sceptical about the

30 Cf. 0.3 footnote 19.

31 In 7.2 the same issue will be discussed from the perspective of Russell’s own former quasi-Meinongianism and the role played by Frege in liberating him from it.

32 In section 8 this statement will be qualified.

ToD. In OF §44, he even considers abandoning it altogether (Russell, B. (1905 c), p. 385). As author of OD, however, he takes a much more self-confident stand. Evidently, this considerable change must be due to a new insight having emerged after the completion of OF, namely that the ToD has the great advantage of throwing a new light on the problem of non-being. Thus, as seen from OD itself, its origin appears to be twofold. Its writer was not a monk who copied a holy manuscript, but rather a very agile philosopher, who, even in his exposition of the GEA, changed a lot of things and who, in doing so, not only drew from OF, but as well from a whole series of new insights which must have come to his mind before or during the composition of OD.³³

But – and this is another fact whose importance has often been ignored – in OD the former doubts have not completely disappeared. Some vestige of them remains and is in fact quite essential to its tenor. OD itself is much more ambiguous than is generally supposed. This appears from the second part of the very first paragraph. Supposing himself to have explained what denoting phrases are, Russell says:

The interpretation of such phrases is a matter of considerable difficulty; indeed, it is very hard to frame any theory not susceptible of formal refutation. All the difficulties with which I am acquainted are met, so far as I can discover, by the theory which I am about to explain.

OD essentially contains a *second* view on denoting. Its main claim is, that its subject matter is much *more problematic* than at first might be supposed. The available theories lead to unsuspected problems. Anyhow, the issue of denoting is in need of *some* new theory. Relying on his own experience, Russell proves to be completely certain of this contention. The second claim of OD, which of course presupposes the first one, is put forward with much less commitment. Russell wants to advocate a very specific new theory on denoting, namely the ToD. More conspicuously, this appears from the end of the very last paragraph. There, referring to the view of the ToD, he concludes:

I will only beg the reader not to make up his mind against the view – as he might be tempted to do, on account of its apparently excessive complication – until he has attempted to construct a theory of his own on the subject of denotation. This attempt, I believe, will convince him that, whatever the true theory may be, it cannot have such simplicity as one might have expected beforehand.

33 See 16.1.

2.5 GEA's import and scope (ad b)

If OD contained no other critical arguments than the KFA, it would be unambiguous in tenor. Consequently, the mere fact of its actually being otherwise indicates that it must contain at least one critical argument with a quite different legal status. Now, in the body of Russell's exposition, one and only one such argument occurs: the GEA. In paragraph 18 it is introduced as follows:

The relation of the meaning to the denotation involves certain rather curious difficulties, which seem in themselves sufficient to prove that the theory which leads to such difficulties must be wrong.

The words "rather curious" reveal that Russell must have been surprised by those difficulties and did not know for certain how to *explain* them. He merely claims that "the theory which leads to such difficulties must be wrong", not that it is wrong in virtue of its being opposed to the ToD. Consequently, the GEA significantly differs in import from the KFA. Not being conceived from the point of view of the ToD, it is rather prospective with regard to a possible new theory than retrospective in character. Long before the manuscript OF was dug up, an attentive reader of OD could have guessed that it might have led Russell to the *conception* of the ToD.

In being addressed to both Russell and Frege, the GEA, of course, differs significantly from the corresponding passage in OF §§35-39.³⁴ After having finished that manuscript, Russell must have asked himself whether the problem detected in his own former theory is also to be found in Frege's similar doctrine of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. Having discussed the subject with him about one year before, Russell was quite well aware of at least some of their differences, as is evidently reflected in OD, paragraph 11, second footnote.³⁵ The essential point, however, was not and still is not how great the differences are, but, rather, how relevant they are to the problem of reflexivity. Russell must have faced a question very similar to the one he had faced when he contacted Frege after having discovered the paradox, namely: Is my problem a private one; is it merely due to the un-Fregean character of my logic? Both in 1902, when he wrote his first letter to Frege, and in 1905, when he only used Frege's name in OD, his answer was negative. And in both cases, it is not based on any available explanation, but on having sensed the unsuspected and obstinate

34 This will be cited in perspective in section 8. In the said passage, Frege is not mentioned. Still, he is virtually present.

35 For further discussion, see 23.1.

nature of the problem itself. That in the former case Russell's diagnosis, although mingled with misunderstandings, was essentially right, has been generally acknowledged, both by Frege himself and by others. The question whether this also applies to the latter case, deserves an extensive investigation, which is far beyond the scope of this chapter, but will be discussed below, in 25.2.

2.6 The riddle of Russell's forgetfulness solved (ad c)

However, another related question does indeed belong to the present discussion, namely whether a positive result of such an investigation must lead to a new, historically enlightened version of revisionism. This, in fact, seems to be the position of Makin (2000), who, as far as I can see, has discussed the subject more thoroughly than anyone else. I fully agree with his main contention, namely that the GEA's applicability to Frege's theory cannot be disproved by its possibly purely Russellian origin. But I disagree with the assumption Makin shares with all other commentators, that the origin of the GEA actually is purely Russellian. This point is beyond the scope of the present chapter. It will be discussed in the second part of this thesis, especially in section 8. But I equally disagree with another assumption even Makin has uncritically taken over from all commentators, namely that the two critical arguments contained in OD are of equal legal status. They are both supposed to argue in favour of the ToD. The discussion of this tenet falls clearly within the scope of the present chapter.

In 2.2 I have argued, that the riddle of OD's structure cannot be solved unless a *formal* difference between the KFA and the GEA is acknowledged, a formal difference in view of the ToD. If the KFA is right, then it lends support the ToD. But the same does not hold true of the GEA. It fails to be "imperative" with regard to the ToD. For it does not claim to provide an explanation of the old theory's failure. Indeed, if the ToD is right, then the problem discussed in the GEA must be explained in a specific way. Then it is supposed to originate from the assumption that "denoting phrases have any meaning in themselves". But this explanation is by far not the only possible, let alone the only plausible one.

From Church onwards, all commentators, including Makin, have assumed as a matter of course that the two arguments occurring in OD are of equal legal status. Both are supposed to be meant as support for the ToD. Therefore, either you side with Russell and his favourite theory and the GEA or you dislike all of them.

Indeed, silently and indirectly, Russell has fostered such an approach. But – and that is the sticking point – he never adopted it himself! On the contrary, his strange and misleading behaviour testifies to his remaining conviction that the ToD is at variance with the very problem which gave rise to its conception! That is the second grain of truth concealed in his notorious comment on what led him to the ToD: the GEA did *not* lead him to its *acceptance*, quite to the *contrary*.

Therefore, ignoring these formal difference between the KFA and the GEA amounts to the same as ignoring both the riddle of OD's structure and the riddle of Russell's forgetfulness. Russell's initial doubts about the validity of the ToD are based on his realization that it is not equal to the difficulties it is supposed to avoid. For these originally and primarily bear on *indefinite* descriptions, whereas the ToD is mainly concerned with definite ones. Indeed, denoting phrases containing the word "all" or "some" may be construed in a Fregean fashion, as expounded in OD, paragraph 5 and 6. But the word "any", which both in POM §86 and in OF §47 is associated with the variable, remains unexplained! Of course, according to OD, paragraph 4, p. 480, "the notion of the variable" is to be taken "as fundamental". Nevertheless, if the variable denotes any entity whatever in virtue of its having a specific meaning, namely 'any entity' –and as seen from the general perspective of Russell's philosophy of logic, this idea seems to be equally fundamental –then the problem of reflexivity, i.e. the problem of explaining the use of inverted commas, equally applies to *that* meaning.³⁶

In OD, indefinite descriptions are largely overshadowed by definite ones. The unsuspecting reader gets the misleading impression that the GEA does not have anything to do with ambiguously denoting phrases like "anything". So, the seriousness of the problem has been considerably eclipsed; but, as has appeared above, it has not eclipsed sufficiently to take away Russell's doubts.

What is more, such a reader also gets the impression that making the distinction between primary and secondary occurrence is a privilege of the ToD. This, however, is certainly not what Russell had in mind. The part of OF preceding the discovery of the ToD, especially §23, bristles with similar distinctions. And although the notion of 'occurrence' does not play such a prominent role in Frege's logic, he nevertheless makes use of something very similar, in distinguishing between direct and indirect *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* in order to cope with problems such as puzzle (1). In fact, the primary, but somewhat less obvious objective of the GEA is: to prove that the old theory is

³⁶ This issue will be extensively discussed in chapter V. See especially 22.3 and 24.1.

not able to effectuate such a distinction.³⁷

What the self-confident Russell probably did have in mind is the contention that the old theory fails to do so, *because* it wrongly supposes that denoting phrases have any meaning in themselves and that therefore the ToD, denying this presupposition and focussing on the propositions in whose verbal expression denoting phrases occur, can smoothly make the distinction required to solve the puzzles.

This sounds very attractive indeed, but the trouble is that in this way the contrast between direct and indirect discourse is ignored. The insecure Russell must have had an inkling of it, for although in OF different conflicting views are explored, one thing seems beyond doubt, namely that a proposition can only be *about* another one, if the latter occurs in a different way. So, instead of *That the S is P, is Q*, we could also write: *'The S is P' is Q*. Consequently, the problem of reflexivity which is concerned with the explanation of inverted commas, also applies to propositions.

What force, then, was powerful enough to bring about Russell's final self-confidence, to which OD owes its established fame? Evidently, another discovery must have been effective in changing his attitude towards the ToD, namely the discovery that its main principle could be ingeniously used in order to give the Theory of Types its required facelift (see above section 1.1). So, the desire to solve another problem, his famous paradox, lies behind Russell's final, wholehearted acceptance of the ToD.³⁸

In its later expositions, from *Principia* onwards, the discussion of puzzle (1) survives, but the misleading intimation that the distinction between primary and secondary occurrence is a privilege of the ToD is reinforced to such a degree that the GEA is replaced by a simplified, amputated substitute (see Russell, B. and Whitehead A.N. (1910), p. 67).³⁹ It is the decisive step that led Russell and his commentators to underestimate the value of OD itself. For that value consists in making clear what OD primarily purports to make clear, namely that the issue of denoting is more problematic than generally supposed.⁴⁰ And that, of course, does not prevent the ToD from being honoured for what it is: a stimulating attempt to cope with an unexpected problem.

From POM onwards, Russell was confident in his conviction that there

37 Cf. 20.4 and 20.5.

38 Cf. 25.1.

39 C.f. 24.3.

40 As I shall argue in 15.3, the quintessence of the problem is not denoting as such, but the incompatibility of denoting and the axiom of external difference.

is a connection between denoting and the paradox. As far as I can see, the importance of this conviction has been obscured by his somewhat too anxious desire to get rid of the paradox. Maybe, the true value of OD consists in showing that the main *problem* of denoting is just one side of a larger problem of which the paradox constitutes the other side. After all, the two problems have, each of them, to do with reflexivity, although in mutually opposed ways, the famous one with an excess, the other with a deficit of reflexivity.⁴¹

41 See 25.

Chapter II

Russell, Meinong and the Origin of the Theory of Descriptions⁴²

3 How to criticize the official view

3.1 The unofficial versus the official view

Just as natural numbers have not been called ‘natural’ until other, less natural ones were adopted, so the ‘official view’ on Russell’s famous Theory of Descriptions (ToD) has not been called ‘official’ until fragments of another, ‘unofficial’ one began to emerge. The most obvious and striking feature of the official view consists in its attributing a prominent role to Meinong as *the* philosopher who actually represented in its purest form the view the ToD is *opposed* to. Both the origin and the importance of Russell’s theory are supposed to be out-and-out anti-Meinongian.

The official view on the ToD and its history is not just a piece of philosophical gossip whose prestige is mainly based on frequent and inconsiderate repetition; it has been strongly promoted by Russell himself. What is more, he seems to be its very originator. In *My Mental Development* Russell wrote: “.....the desire to avoid Meinong’s unduly populous realm of being led me to the theory of descriptions.”⁴³ This self-ascription has greatly contributed to its long-lasting dominance. Who dares to doubt the reliability of the story told by the very person who may be supposed to have been better acquainted with the real background and genesis of the ToD than anyone else in the whole world?

Indeed, without the help of new, unsuspected evidence no one could have mustered up enough courage to challenge Russell’s authority. The required support for a rivalling account came from the manuscript *On Fundamentals* (OF) whose importance was discovered by Coffa (1980). As appears unambiguously from this text, the ToD in fact was discovered on occasion of a

42 Slightly revised version of Boukema (2007).

43 Russell, B. (1944), p.13.

problem that has no obvious connection with Meinong at all, namely the one raised by the question of how a denoting concept can be made the subject of a proposition.

In subsequent years new, although somewhat more controversial evidence has been put forward against Russell's account, most notably by Griffin (1996, p.57), who has argued that the supposed Meinongianism or quasi-Meinongianism Russell wanted to get rid of by means of the ToD, is merely fictitious. He concludes that

...contrary to what until recently was the almost unanimous view of philosophers, Russell's reasons for adopting his new theory of definite descriptions in 1905 could have *nothing whatsoever* to do with the need to prune back an unduly populous realm of being.

Others, such as Cartwright (1987) and Hylton (1990) have adopted similar views. Although I do not know for sure how much support the unofficial view has found among Russell scholars, I assume its authority has sufficiently increased to provoke the question in how far its example is worth following.

3.2 The need for further criticism

There is one rather obvious reason for being suspicious of the belief that Russell's account is a mere myth. The importance of the fact, noted above, that the official story originated from its very protagonist, has been overlooked. In virtue of this fact, the emergence of the official view is itself part of the true history of the ToD. Therefore, if a considerable amount of painstaking exegetical and critical analysis results in a new, refreshing and stimulating view, it cannot be plausible, unless it proves to be capable of explaining the remarkable and fascinating historical fact that the protagonist has promoted another view. If Russell's own account deviates from what is supposed to be the true story, this requires an explanation. What kind of motive might have enticed him to distort his own mental development?

The weakness of the newly established critical assessment of the official story does not only consist in its failure to ask this question and to make an attempt at answering it, but also in its being so severe, as to leave no room for any sound answer at all. If Russell's distortion of the historical facts is understandable, his account must at least contain some kernel of truth.

How can such a truth be detected? Not by means of a reactionary attempt

at gluing together the debris left by the iconoclasts in order to rehabilitate the official view. On the contrary, the elements the official view consists of are to be subjected to further deconstruction in order to detect the smaller pieces that may fit into a new coherent whole. The extremism of the newly established critical analysis is not due to its being too critical or too analytical, but rather to its being not critical and analytical enough. For the ideal shared by all who are seriously engaged in criticism consists in the rejection of no less *and no more* than what on closer scrutiny appears to be false. Trying to avoid the rejection of what only seems to be false is just as essential and important as trying to avoid the acceptance of what only seems to be true.

3.3 Preliminary analysis of the official view

Analysis cannot proceed without some data, which constitute its raw material. I shall therefore start by more fully quoting the above-mentioned key passage from *My Mental Development*.

Having described how in June 1901 “the period of honeymoon delight” immediately after his visit to the International Congress of Philosophy in Paris came to an abrupt end by his discovery of the astonishing contradiction, Russell proceeds as follows:

At first, I hoped the matter was trivial and could be easily cleared up; but early hopes were succeeded by something very near to despair. Throughout 1903 and 1904, I pursued will-o’-the wisps and made no progress. At last, in the spring of 1905, a different problem, which proved soluble, gave the first glimmer of hope. The problem was that of descriptions, and its solution suggested a new technique.

Scholastic realism was a metaphysical theory, but every metaphysical theory has a technical counterpart. I had been a realist in the scholastic or Platonic sense; I had thought that cardinal integers, for instance, have a timeless being. When integers were reduced to classes of classes, this being was transferred to classes. Meinong, whose work interested me, applied the arguments of realism to descriptive phrases. Everyone agrees that “the golden mountain does not exist” is a true proposition. But it has, apparently, a subject, “the golden mountain,” and if this subject did not designate some object, the proposition would seem to be meaningless. Meinong inferred that there is a golden mountain, which is golden and a mountain, but does not exist. He even thought that the existent golden mountain is existent, but does not exist. This did not satisfy me, and the desire to

avoid Meinong's unduly populous realm of being led me to the theory of descriptions. What was of importance in this theory was the discovery that, in analysing a significant sentence, one must not assume that each separate word or phrase has significance on its own account. "The golden mountain" can be part of a significant sentence, but is not significant in isolation. It soon appeared that class-symbols could be treated like descriptions, i.e., as non-significant parts of significant sentences. This made it possible to see, in a general way, how a solution of the contradictions might be possible. The particular solution offered in *Principia Mathematica* had various defects, but at any rate it showed that the logician is not presented with a complete *impasse*. (Russell, 1944, pp. 13-14)

The general tenor of this exposition is quite clear. Russell primarily wants to explain how he managed to cope with the paradox. In this connection the ToD comes in. Although that theory was not discovered on occasion of the paradox but on occasion of another problem, "the problem of description", later on the new technique it provided proved to be of great importance in paving the way out of the *impasse*. So two different questions are answered in one stroke, namely "What was the decisive development leading to the solution of the contradiction?" and "What is the main logical importance of the ToD?"

What is the role of Meinong in this connection? Evidently, he is supposed to represent a canonical example of excessive realism. The ToD made it possible to circumvent ontological extravagance. What is more, it actually originated from "the desire to avoid Meinong's unduly populous realm of being". In saying so, Russell of course does not want to reveal an unsuspected feature of the ToD, but rather to add a little extra to the importance of a connection with which all readers who ever studied the ToD are supposed to be familiar. For it is a remarkable fact indeed that, although Russell's numerous expositions of the ToD differ significantly from each other in several respects, one element is to be found in all of them, namely criticism of Meinong, which is always very nearly the same as expounded in this passage.⁴⁴ So, the essential point of Russell's notorious remark is that this criticism is of pivotal importance not only to the nature and the foundation or *justification* of the ToD, but to its *genesis* as well.

This distinction between genesis and justification may in a quite obvious way lead to another similar distinction, namely between the *conception* and the *adoption* of the ToD. It is, I think, quite significant that both Russell and the

44 See OD paragraph 10, Whitehead and Russell (1910), p.66, Russell (1911), p.162, Russell (1918), p.248 and Russell (1919), p.169.

proponents of the unofficial view have failed to make it. What Russell meant or at least suggested in saying that he was *led* to the ToD by his “desire to avoid Meinong’s unduly populous realm of being” evidently is, that on occasion of “the problem of descriptions”, a problem raised by his former theory of descriptions (the theory of denoting concepts put forward in POM, Chapter V) and connected with Meinong, he *conceived and fully accepted* his second theory of descriptions which *afterwards* appeared quite essential to the solution of the paradox.

The essential elements contained in this story seem to be as follows:

- a1) Meinong actually represented an extreme and excessive realism.
- a2) After his turn from idealism to full realism and before the discovery of the ToD, Russell had adopted at least some views very similar to those of Meinong.
- b1) These Meinongian or quasi-Meinongian elements were essentially connected with Russell’s theory of denoting concepts.
- b2) On occasion of a difficulty in that theory, his desire to avoid his own Meinongianism arose.
- c1) This desire led to the conception of a new theory of denoting, the ToD.
- c2) Immediately after its conception, this new theory was fully and wholeheartedly accepted.
- c3) Afterwards the link with the paradox was discovered.

As far as I can see, these elements constitute the meaning of the official view. In order to separate their truth from their falsity I shall distinguish three varieties of Meinongianism. The first one, *trans-realism*, will be discussed in section 4. *Pace* Griffin, something like it is actually to be found in *Principles*. Section 5 will be concerned with the second variety: Meinong’s *essentialism*. Neither it, nor something like it, is compatible with Russell’s realism. In section 6 I shall argue that the connection with the theory of denoting concepts is merely accidental. Inspired by Frege, Russell made use of the theory in order to get rid of his own former quasi-Meinongianism. In section 7 the third, essentially hidden variety of Meinongianism is taken into account. Russell’s discovery of this *crypto-Meinongianism*, which took place after the ToD had been conceived, rejected and tentatively repaired, contributed to the *adoption* of the ToD, but was not sufficient to give rise to its full acceptance. The ideological character of the official story is not due to its claim that the ToD is out and out anti-Meinongian, but rather to its suppressing both the delay in the ToD’s adoption and the problem which caused this delay, namely the one on whose occasion it actually was conceived.

4 Quasi-Meinongianism in Russell's realism

4.1 Meinong's 'excessive realism'

Meinong would fiercely protest against being depicted as a proponent of a realism that is more excessive than its Russellian or Fregean variant. Typical of Meinong's theory of objects is not, as is suggested in the passage quoted in the previous section, an attempt to allow the intrusion of new and strange denizens into the realm of being, but rather to extend the range of possible thought and knowledge to objects *beyond* that realm.

In one important respect Meinong's realism is even less excessive than that adhered to by Frege and Russell. For he refuses to attribute reality to false propositions, whereas according to Frege and Russell, these are just as real as true ones. It is quite essential to Meinong's point of view that the complexity of propositions, or 'objectives' as he calls them, is to be taken with a pinch of salt. Just as a real state of affairs may concern something unreal, so a state of affairs concerning something real may itself be unreal.⁴⁵

I do not want to suggest that Russell was completely unaware of these points. The latter is mentioned and extensively discussed in Russell, 1904, pp. 471-474, the first seems to be acknowledged in OD, paragraph 10, where Russell renders Meinong's view much more fairly in saying:

Thus 'the present King of France', 'the round square', etc., are supposed to be genuine objects. It is admitted that such objects do not *subsist*, but nevertheless they are supposed to be objects.

Still, the fact that 39 years later Russell spoke of "Meinong's unduly populous realm of being" instead of "Meinong's unduly populous realm of *objects*", is not due to a merely insignificant slip of his pen. What he wants to convey is more complicated than he suggests, because it evidently not only bears on his opponent, but on himself as well. Russell and Meinong both assume that any object of possible thought or knowledge is as subject matter, or as *term*, as Russell calls it, involved in true and false propositions. Whatever may be thought of is such that some propositions about it are true and others are false. For if we suppose some object to be such that it stands alone, isolated from all propositions, then it would in virtue of that very circumstance be involved in the proposition that it is not involved in any proposition.⁴⁶ Conversely, whatever occurs as term in some proposition could possibly be thought of.

⁴⁵ Cf. below 23.2.

⁴⁶ Cf. 9.2.

Russell and Meinong also share the conviction that beyond that realm of objects, i.e. beyond the realm of what *may* occur as object of our thought and what *actually* occurs as term in propositions, there is absolutely nothing.

However, they disagree on the question how this all-embracing, transcendental realm is related to the realm of being. According to Russell, they are co-extensive, whereas according to Meinong, they are not. Never, neither when he wrote *Principles*, nor when he afterwards extensively studied the works of Meinong, nor of course after the adoption of the ToD, did Russell feel any inclination to accept objects without being.

Being is that which belongs to every conceivable term, to every possible object of thought – in short to everything that can possibly occur in any proposition, true or false, and to all such propositions themselves. Being belongs to whatever can be counted. If *A* be any term that can be counted as one, it is plain that *A* is something, and therefore that *A* is. “*A* is not” must always be either false or meaningless. For if *A* were nothing, it could not be said not to be; “*A* is not” implies that there is a term *A* whose being is denied, and hence that *A* is. Thus unless “*A* is not” be an empty sound, it must be false – whatever *A* may be, it certainly is. (POM, p. 449)

This view is at odds with the very starting point of Meinong’s theory of objects, for that consists in the assumption that although it is always inconsistent to say of something that it is not something or not an object, it is far from inconsistent to say that something is not real and has no being.

However, Meinong never succeeded in convincing Russell of this view. In December 1904 Russell writes to him: “I have always believed until now that every object must in some sense have *being*, and I find it difficult to admit unreal objects.”⁴⁷

We are now in a position to understand, at least partly, Russell’s somewhat puzzling slip of the pen in *My Mental Development*. As seen from the point of view of his persistent traditional and un-Meinongian conviction that the notion of being is transcendental and coextensive with the notion of object or term of a proposition, Meinong’s attempt to extend the realm of objects beyond being amounts to the same as an attempt to overcrowd the realm of being.⁴⁸

47 Lackey, 1973, p.16.

48 For further discussion see 5.1 and 7.3 below.

4.2 Russell's realism

Meinong's trans-realism, his attempt to stand up for both the epistemological importance and the unreality of unreal objects, is part of a larger philosophical project. He is dissatisfied with traditional metaphysics, because in his opinion it does not succeed in fulfilling its own promise of being the most universal of all sciences. Meinong wants to free it from its established confinements in order to widen its scope.⁴⁹

In this respect there exists a very remarkable similarity with Russell's turn from traditional idealism to his revolutionary absolute and unrestricted realism. Due to the established inclination to overrate Moore's positive and Bradley's negative contribution to this revolution and to underrate Leibniz's part that is both positive and negative, this similarity has often been overlooked. However stimulating the new ideas of Moore might have been to Russell, it is Leibniz, not Moore, who made him aware of the *logical* principle involved in *all* kinds of *metaphysical* idealism, not only in the particular version propounded by Leibniz, but also, to mention two important examples, in Bradley's holistic monism and in Russell's former pluralistic holism, namely that *eventually every proposition must have a subject and a predicate*:

In the belief that propositions must, in the last analysis, have a subject and a predicate, Leibniz does not differ either from his predecessors or from his successors. Any philosophy which uses either Substance or the Absolute will be found, on inspection, to depend upon this belief. Kant's belief in an unknowable thing-in-itself was largely due to the same theory. It cannot be denied, therefore, that the doctrine is important. Philosophers have differed, not so much in respect of belief in its truth, as in respect of their consistency in carrying it out. In this latter respect, Leibniz deserves credit. (Russell 1900, p. 15)

What does the "belief that propositions must, in the last analysis, have a subject and a predicate" have to do with idealism? And why does its rejection lead to realism? Here we meet the second obstacle that might prevent us from understanding the nature of Russell's realism.⁵⁰ These questions cannot be answered as long as the classical Aristotelian and Kantian view of logic as a kind of formal proto-science which precedes real knowledge and does not involve any metaphysical assumptions, is taken for granted. But there are

⁴⁹ See Meinong (1904), p.4.

⁵⁰ Cf. 0.2.

good reasons not to do so, for Russell never subscribed to such a view, neither during⁵¹ nor after his idealist period. Therefore, the subject-predicate principle is to be construed as logico-metaphysical in character. There is one, and as far as I can see only one, way to meet this requirement: by taking into account the notion of *substance*, mentioned in the above-quoted passage.

The idealist principle Leibniz made Russell aware of, bears on the connection between *truth* and *being*. Whatever is true is eventually, “in the last analysis”⁵², true about what is supposed to be the only really real kind of thing, namely a concrete existent, a *substance*. Single substances are, in virtue of their being ‘in themselves’ and not in something else, the ultimate subjects of propositions. And what is true about them, consists in their being qualified, in their having predicates, which are supposed to be their private properties. These predicates or ‘accidents’ are not in themselves. The only way they are is to be in the substance they belong to. Their *esse* is *in-esse*.⁵³

In my opinion, the idealism Russell is opposed to is not primarily epistemological in character, as Hylton (2004), pp. 207-212 has suggested, but metaphysical. What is more, generally it is not called idealism at all, but rather “conceptualism”.⁵⁴ It involves the exclusion of all kinds of things from the realm of real being. Whatever cannot be construed as a concrete individual or as one of its private properties must be unreal, or at least not fully real. It is relegated to the realm of the merely *ideal*, i.e. the realm of abstract conceptual deviations from reality which may point to it because they are derived from it, but do not properly belong to it.⁵⁵

What kinds of items are deemed to dwell in this limbo? Universals, relations, propositions (especially false ones), space, time, and last but not least: plurality. And these, of course, are exactly the things Russell is anxious to allow unrestricted entrance into the realm of being. Just as idealism is based on *restricted* aboutness of propositions, so the main philosophical principle underlying the logic of POM claims their *unrestricted* aboutness.

51 See Russell (1897), §56, pp.64-66.

52 Such an analysis is based on the Aristotelian principle that the more universal only exists in its less universal specifications. A ‘generic’ universal such as ‘coloured’ is supposed to have no other being than being embodied in specific ways of being coloured, such as being red. Russell denies this principle. See POM, §134, p.138: “Redness, in fact, appears to be (when taken to mean one particular shade) a simple concept, which, although it implies colour, does not contain colour as a constituent.”

53 Cf. 22.2.

54 See 0.3.

55 “*Entia rationis cum fundamento in re*” (Beings of reason with a foundation in the real thing).

However, Russell's realism is not unlimited without qualification. It does not at random attribute being to whatever might supposed to be real, but, at least as far as logic is concerned, only to those items that *must* be acknowledged because they are *presupposed* in the very assumption that they are not. For example, there *must* be truth, for if there were no truth, it would be true that there is no truth. Also: there *must* be many truths, for if there were only one truth, then that very truth would be the only one there is, which is absurd.⁵⁶ For the sake of brevity, I'll call this feature of Russell's realism *reflexive determinism*.

4.3 Russell's quasi-Meinongianism

We are now in a position to allow due weight to the context in which the most notable piece of evidence in favour of Russell's supposed 'Meinongianism' occurs, namely the passage from *Principles* subsequent to the one quoted in 4.1. There Russell says:

Numbers, the Homeric gods, relations, chimaeras and four-dimensional spaces all have being, for if they were not entities of a kind, we could make no propositions about them. Thus being is a general attribute of everything, and to mention anything is to show that it is. *Existence*, on the contrary, is the prerogative of some only amongst beings. To exist is to have a specific relation to existence – a relation, by the way, which existence itself does not have. This shows, incidentally, the weakness of the existential theory of judgment – the theory, that is, that every proposition is concerned with something that exists. For if this theory were true, it would still be true that existence itself is an entity, and it must be admitted that existence does not exist. Thus the consideration of existence itself leads to non-existential propositions, and so contradicts the theory. The theory seems, in fact, to have arisen from neglect of the distinction between existence and being. Yet this distinction is essential, if we are ever to deny the existence of anything. For what does not exist must be something, or it would be meaningless to deny its existence; and hence we need the concept of being, as that which belongs even to the non-existent. (POM §427, pp.449-450)

The larger context of this passage will be discussed in 5.3. For the present purpose it is sufficient to note that Russell is arguing against one of the main

⁵⁶ Cf. e.g. Russell (1906), p.133.

points implied by the idealist principle mentioned in the previous section, the restriction of the aboutness of propositions to *existents* or, what amounts to the same, to substances and their accidents.⁵⁷ In order to prove that this restriction is intolerable, Russell makes use of his favourite reflexive mode of argument: If it were true that whatever is true is true of some existent, then it would be true as well that existence belongs to all entities. That very supposed truth however would itself be an example of a proposition concerning a non-existent universal.

Therefore, being is wider than existence. Although a sentence of the form “A is not” can never express a true proposition, a sentence of the form “A does not exist” may quite well do so, for example “Existence does not exist”. And of course, it is quite easy to give similar examples Russell might have had in mind, such as: “The relation ‘greater than’ does not exist” or “The number 2 does not exist”.

As far as these and similar examples are concerned, Russell’s contention is quite innocent. Both Meinong and Frege would agree with him. But no doubt Russell also wants his view to be applied to examples of a different kind, such as “Zeus does not exist” or “Pegasus does not exist”. At least, that seems to be implied by the first part of the text quoted above. For according to Russell, Homeric gods are entities because and in so far as they can be mentioned. And mentioning a Homeric god of course does not consist in the use of the phrase “Homeric god” or of some denoting phrase derived from it, but in the use of one of the divine proper names that actually occur in Homer’s *Iliad* or *Odyssey*.⁵⁸

57 Russell takes the notion of existence, borrowed from traditional metaphysics, as widely as possible. If something is really in space and time or only in time, it exists. If space and time and the points or moments they consist of, are real, they exist as well. See: Russell (1903a), p. 449: “Both being and existence, I believe, belong to empty space.” Finally, if God really is, then God exists in spite of His being beyond time. See: Russell (1905a), p.486, where the “super-sensible existence attributed to the Deity” is mentioned in this connection. See also Russell (1900), §§110-111.

58 I concede that in the case of chimaeras this interpretation is less plausible, because, as far as I know, they lack proper names. I do not think however, that this difficulty is serious enough to prove that Russell never could have held the view I attribute to him. In fact, he is not primarily concerned with language at all. His main argument is rather, that if a definite chimaera occurs in a certain story, then denying the existence of that particular chimaera would be impossible unless the story is really about some *entity*. And every particular entity which actually is presented to the mind *can* be mentioned by means of a proper name.

5 Quasi-Meinongianism without essentialism

5.1 The possibility of quasi-Meinongianism without essentialism

Russell and Meinong both accept that “Zeus” is a genuine proper name standing for a non-existent object. They agree on the truth of the proposition that Zeus does not exist. What other propositions about Zeus are supposed to be true? Take for example the proposition that according to Greek mythology Zeus, assuming the form of a white bull, carried off a pretty nymph called Europa. Both Russell and Meinong, I presume, would accept its truth without further ado.

But what about the supposed fact that Zeus abducted the said nymph? Is it a real fact? According to Meinong it is! Why so? Why not assume that the supposed facts concerning Zeus are just as unreal as Zeus himself? Such a view seems much more appropriate to a philosopher who wants to speak in defence of the unreal!

Both the adherents of the official view and their opponents have overlooked the importance of this rather obvious question. Ayer (1971) and Quine (1967) assume as a matter of course that it is impossible to allow fictional characters or Homeric gods to be genuine objects without giving credit to all established stories that purport to be about them. Applied to the Russell of *Principles* this amounts to the same as assuming that *if* he concedes that Homeric gods and chimaeras are entities – and, as appears from the text quoted in the previous section, there is overwhelming evidence in favour of that assumption – *then* he must suppose propositional functions such as ‘x is a god dwelling at the top of the Olympus’ or ‘x is a chimaera’ to be true for some values of x.

However, as Griffin (1996), p.49 has pointed out, these adherents of the official view just ignore that according to POM §73, p.74 ‘chimaera’ is a null-class concept, i.e. the propositional function ‘x is a chimaera’ is false for all entities. Taking this textual evidence as point of departure, Griffin argues in the opposite direction, concluding that Russell’s supposed quasi-Meinongianism must be a myth. Indeed, as Griffin is prepared to admit, this challenging conclusion asks for a new interpretation of Russell’s saying that chimaeras are entities. And Griffin actually provides an ingenious interpretation (p.54), namely that Russell failed to use inverted commas. What he actually meant is not that chimaeras are entities, but rather that *denoting concepts* derived from the class concept ‘chimaera’, such as ‘all chimaeras’ or ‘some chimaeras’, are entities.

In my opinion it is quite implausible that Russell failed to use the very

italics or inverted commas that according to POM §56, p.53 are of utmost logical importance.⁵⁹ Furthermore, neither in §427, where chimaeras are actually said to be entities, nor in any other part of the chapter to which that section belongs, denoting concepts are at issue. Finally, if Griffin's exegesis were right, Russell could just as well have mentioned things like even prime numbers greater than 2. Ignoring the fact that he did not do so, amounts to ignoring the main point of the text, namely that being is not confined to existence.

As soon as the assumption shared by Griffin and his opponents is abandoned, another much less far-fetched solution appears to be possible. The inverted commas Russell could have used are rather *scare quotes*. What is more, it is quite understandable that he did not use them, for according to the dictionary a chimaera is something that *according to ancient Greek stories* is a creature with a lion's head, a goat's body and a snake's tail that can exhale fire. And as far as Homeric gods are concerned, there is no need of scare quotes at all, because Homer occurs in their definition. Of course, in saying that 'chimaera' is a null class concept, Russell did not mean that there are no entities which according to ancient Greek stories are such and such, but rather that there are no entities which are such as ancient Greek mythology supposes them to be. After all, why would Russell's firm belief in the aboutness of Greek mythology force him to believe in Greek mythology itself?

5.2 Russell's realism versus Meinong's essentialism

Against this interpretation a serious objection could be raised, namely that it imputes a very strange and abstract, not to say inconsistent, belief in characterless characters to Russell. This difficulty may help us to get down to the very heart of the matter. For if the Russell of *Principles* actually held the view I attribute to him, Meinong would strongly disagree.

He would blame Russell for crypto-psychologism. For the assumption that, apart from the fact that Zeus does not exist, all real facts concerning him involve human imagination and belief, seems to be very near psychologism. It implies that the nature (*Sosein*) of the object called Zeus would be wholly determined by the mental acts performed by the Greeks. In short, as seen from Meinong's perspective, the view I attribute to Russell is an inconsistent and half-hearted mixture of objectivism and subjectivism. On the one hand, Zeus would be some particular object whose identity is fixed independently of human thought. On the other hand, his being such and such would merely

59 See 9.2.

consist in his actually being supposed to be so and so by certain people.

Most philosophers are prone to thinking that whatever is unreal is either in the mind or somehow created by it. According to Meinong this view is inconsistent. For whatever is in the mind must be a real part of a real mental process. And whatever is produced by the mind must be real as well. Creation cannot be real unless it results in something real. Although unreal objects are outside being, they must in some way or other be in *touch* with being. Unreal objects need to be propped up by real facts concerning them in order to be objects at all. But these facts cannot all of them be mental. The only facts that may provide the needed support are *Soseinsobjektive*, i.e. facts constituting their essence, their being *what* they are. Zeus for example derives his identity from the fact that he is male, not female, super-human, none of the mortals, master of thunder and lightning, not of love or fertility.

Meinong's essentialism is based on the idea that objects need to have *intrinsic* properties in order to be distinct objects at all. Because distinctness or difference is a relation, this assumption may be viewed as a particular application of the general principle that "every relation is grounded in the nature of the related terms". It goes without saying that this *axiom of internal relations*, as Russell called it, is incompatible with the very essence of his realism.⁶⁰

5.3 The context of POM §427

It is a remarkable and revealing fact that the notorious §427 in which chimaeras and Homeric gods are ranked among entities, is part of a chapter on *Logical Arguments against Points*. This chapter is almost entirely devoted to a criticism of Lotze, who takes a stand close to Leibniz and also close to the idealist Russell, although the latter is not mentioned by the Russell of *Principles*.⁶¹

One of the canonical idealist arguments against the possible reality of empty space is that apart from the different things that occupy space, all points are exactly alike. They seem to be different, but their difference consists in nothing at all. Points are colourless and without character. Or, as the idealist Russell used to say, there is a conception of diversity without diversity of conception.⁶² The realist Russell's retort is:

60 See Russell (1899), p.143 and Russell (1959), Ch.5, where "a paper read to the Aristotelian Society in 1906, which deals with Harold Joachim's book on *The Nature of Truth*", is extensively quoted.

61 Cf. Russell (1897), pp.185-187.

62 Cf. 0.2.

To be exactly alike can only mean – as in Leibniz’s Identity of Indiscernibles – not to have different predicates. But when once it is recognised that there is no essential distinction between subjects and predicates, it is seen that any two simple terms differ immediately – they are two, and this is the sum-total of their differences. (POM, p.451)

In saying that “there is no essential distinction between subjects and predicates” Russell means that any predicate, and more generally any constituent of a proposition, may occur as a genuine subject. For according to him, the *in-esse*, which marks the traditional absolute distinction between substances and their accidents, is to be rejected.

This argument may also be applied to Homeric gods. Apart from all the stories told about them, they are indeed exactly alike. But that does not prevent them from differing immediately from each other. Therefore, the very same argument that seemed to be a serious objection to my interpretation, namely that it forces upon Russell the strange and unacceptable view that fictional characters are in themselves colourless entities, in fact forces upon him a view much too commonsensical and Aristotelian to be compatible with the radical externalist stand of his logic. Maybe this externalism is to be rejected, but if so, not in virtue of its being at odds with common sense, but in virtue of its possible inconsistency. And if it is to be rejected, that cannot be a sound reason for denying that Russell ever adhered to it.

6 The accidental link with denoting

6.1 Russell’s quasi-Meinongianism as independent from the issue of denoting

Thus far I have argued for the actual *existence* of Russell’s quasi-Meinongianism. I have done so in making use of a rather uncommon view on the nature of Russell’s realism, or rather on the way it is opposed to his former idealism. In this connection two aspects of his realism have appeared to play a prominent role. Its Platonic trans-existential import *prompted* Russell to quasi-Meinongian extravagance, its externalist slant *restricted* it in such a way as to make it compatible with the quite un-Meinongian concession that Homeric gods and chimaeras do not and need not possess the properties ascribed to them by Greek mythology.

But, however important these two features of Russell’s realism may be for the nature and limitations of his quasi-Meinongianism, they neither *forced*

him to adopt it, nor *prevented* him from actually doing so. This indeed is quite essential to the view I argue for. Russell's manifest quasi-Meinongianism, although surrounded by fundamental ideas, is itself not fundamental at all. It does not reveal any manifest deep-rooted ontological extravagance, but rather a quite superficial and momentary extravagance in giving examples of non-existent entities. Russell's argument against Lotze would have been just as good as it is, if he had refrained from allowing Homeric gods and chimaeras entrance into the realm of being.

The theory of denoting concepts is not able to add anything to the limited importance of Russell's quasi-Meinongianism. For although that theory presupposes that there are Russellian proper names, it itself is not concerned with them. Once the view is adopted that "Zeus" is a genuine proper name, the distinction between meaning and denotation cannot be applied to it. That, indeed, is one of the most conspicuous and notorious differences with Frege's theory of sense and reference.⁶³

6.2 The theory of denoting concepts as first aid

Although the theory of denoting is unable to support the existence of Russell's quasi-Meinongian extravagance, or its non-existence or its emergence, or even the desire to avoid it, nevertheless, once for whatever reason, its emergence has actually taken place and, for some other reason, the desire to effect its disappearance is awakened, the said theory could possibly be of great help. What is more, it seems to be the only available assistant. For if Russell wants to banish Zeus and his congeners from the realm of being, he will have to give up his former belief that "Zeus" and similar expressions are genuine proper names. And in that case there are only two possible options. Either such an expression is supposed to have no logically relevant signification at all, or it is supposed to be a denoting phrase in disguise, which *expresses* a complex meaning (made up of all the properties which according to Meinong are essential to Zeus), but does not *denote* anything. It goes without saying that the latter alternative is to be preferred.

As far as I know, the manuscript *On Meaning and Denotation*, written in the second half of 1903, is the earliest text that testifies to the actual existence of such a move:

Such phrases as "Arthur Balfour", "two", "yellow", "whiteness", "good", "diversity", and single words generally, designate without expressing: in

63 Cf. 10.1.

these cases, there is only a single object for the phrase, namely the object which it designates. But when a phrase contains several words, not simply juxtaposed, but in any way combined so as to acquire unity, then the phrase, as a rule, expresses a complex meaning. In such a case, there may be no object designated: for example, “the present king of France” expresses a meaning, but does not designate an object. The same holds of “the even prime other than 2”, “the rational square root of 2”, “the bed in which Charles I died”, or “the difference between Mr. Arthur Balfour and the present Prime Minister of England”. In all such cases, the meaning expressed is perfectly intelligible, but nothing whatever is designated. In the case of imaginary persons or places, such as Odysseus or Utopia, the same is true. These appear to be proper names, but as a matter of fact they are not so. “Odysseus” may be taken to *mean* “the hero of the Odyssey”, where the *meaning* of this phrase is involved, and not the imagined object designated. If the Odyssey were history, and not fiction, it would be the designation that would be in question: “Odysseus” would then not express a meaning, but would designate a person, and “the hero of the Odyssey” would not be identical in *meaning* with Odysseus, but would be identical in designation. And so in the other cases, “the present King of England”, “the even prime”, “the positive square root of 2”, “the bed in which Cromwell died”, “the difference between Mr. Chamberlain and the present Prime Minister of England”, are all phrases which have both meaning and designation.⁶⁴

What might have caused Russell’s desire to get rid of his own quasi-Meinongianism? If, as I have argued in 6.1, it is not much more than an insignificant lapse, then the desire to correct it need not be very fundamental either. Anyhow, it seems to be occasioned by Russell’s study of the works of Frege and Meinong. The example of Odysseus seems to be borrowed from Frege’s *Über Sinn und Bedeutung*.⁶⁵

Furthermore, from the first part of the text quoted above, it might be inferred that according to Russell all proper names of abstract entities are derived from single words. If this conjecture is right, expressions such as “Odysseus” or “Zeus” cannot be construed as proper names of non-existent entities. For whatever their etymology may be, they are not used as nominalisations of single words. And because they are, of course, just as little proper names of existent entities, they cannot be proper names at all.

64 Russell 1903b, p.318.

65 Frege (1892a), p.148-149.

6.3 The insufficiency of the quasi-Fregean solution

Is the aid lent by the quasi-Fregean variant of the theory of denoting concepts sufficient to satisfy Russell's desire to get rid of his former quasi-Meinongianism? In order to answer this question, it may be helpful to split up Russell into three personalities: the quasi-Meinongian, the desirous and the quasi-Fregean ones.

The quasi-Meinongian Russell does not labour under any constraint. True, he supposes himself to be forced to accept Zeus's being, but the unavoidability of that is accepted with just as little reluctance as Zeus's being itself. For stoical acceptance of the necessity of reflexive determinism (see 4.2) affords the freedom to deny existence, for example the existence of Zeus. And Russell's opponent, the idealist Lotze, has to go without this freedom because he wrongly supposes himself to be free to refuse that necessity.

As seen from the point of view of the desirous, unsatisfied Russell, being forced to accept Zeus's being is actually a constraint. He wants to get rid both of Zeus's being and the supposed force that forced him to accept it. In fact, he wants to get *more freedom* than the freedom to deny existence, namely *the freedom to deny being as well*. And that, after all, might be a very *deep* desire concealed under the surface of the rather superficial ones discussed in the previous section.⁶⁶

Is the quasi-Fregean Russell able to fulfil this deeper need? According to Peter Hylton he is:

If we have a sentence containing the name or the definite description "A" then, as before, if the sentence is meaningful it must express a proposition. Given the theory of denoting concepts, however, this proposition need not contain the object A itself; it may, rather, contain a denoting concept which denotes A (or purports to do so). There being a proposition of that kind, however, does not require that there actually be such an object as A (or at least the requirement is by no means obvious).

It now becomes possible for the sentence "A is not" to be both meaningful and true – i.e., to be meaningful even though there is no such thing as A. The difference is that now A need not be counted among the constituents of the proposition; instead of containing an object (A), the proposition is now said to contain a denoting concept which, as it happens, does not denote anything.⁶⁷

66 My use of the opposition between freedom and constraint is borrowed from Quine (1948).

67 Hylton, 2003, pp.216-17.

Hylton, I presume, is prepared to admit that a sentence such as “Zeus abducted Europa” will express a proposition which is neither true nor false, as soon as “Zeus” is construed as a denoting phrase in disguise. So, in general, the quasi-Fregean solution will result in truth-value gaps. But, at least as I understand Hylton, there is one exception: the sentence “Zeus is not” will express a true proposition, because its not being about anything at all seems to provide the very reason for its being true!

To me, this interpretation is overly paradoxical, and I can hardly believe that Russell would have accepted it. Anyhow, Hylton deserves credit for having discussed the crucial question, which indeed must be answered affirmatively if the unofficial view is to be rescued in another way than the one proposed by Griffin. And if the first aim I have set myself (see 3.2) is attainable, if it is possible to lay bare a substantial kernel of truth contained in the official view, then Hylton’s solution is to be rejected.

What might lend credibility to his view is the fact that the proposition expressed by “The god of thunder and lightning dwelling at the top of the Olympus *is not*” seems to be equivalent to the proposition that ‘the god of thunder and lightning dwelling at the top of the Olympus’ (i.e. *the denoting concept*) *has no denotation*. This solution, although never put forward by Frege, would be quite Fregean in spirit. For it is based on the un-Meinongian principle, used long before the introduction of the distinction between sense and reference, that the problem of non-being is to be avoided in translating non-being into non-*having* and changing the subject matter accordingly.⁶⁸ Evidently the viability of such an eliminative paraphrase is based on the un-Russellian assumption that equivalent sentences always express one and the same proposition.⁶⁹ Finally, this approach is based on Frege’s belief that any sense may occur as subject of a proposition by means of the indirect sense, which is supposed to be in some way derived from the direct sense, as is indicated by the inverted commas. And that is exactly the issue at stake in the GEA. In this way, the KFA, especially puzzle (3), is reduced to the GEA (see below 23.2 and 23.3). However, as is argued in 23.1, such a solution is beyond the limits of Russell’s perception.

68 Frege (1884), §46, p.59.

69 See for Frege’s view: Frege, 1879, p.2-3 and for its denial, although without any reference to Frege: pp.228-229.

7 Conception and delayed adoption of the ToD

7.1 Trans-Fregean discoveries

As appears from POM, § 476, p.502, Russell initially rejected Frege's notion of indirect sense.⁷⁰ He did so not because it involves an infinite regress, but because he supposed it to be superfluous. For he rather inconsiderately assumed that a denoting concept may occur as term of a proposition more or less in the same way as other concepts may. "If we wish to speak of the [denoting] concept, we have to indicate the fact by italics or inverted commas."⁷¹ Inverted commas are deemed to merely indicate a change in *occurrence*.⁷²

From 1903 onwards Russell begins to realize that the peculiar way in which denoting concepts primarily occur, namely in a subject-position without being the subject of a proposition, prevents them from being made the subject of a proposition in the same way as a predicate or a relation.⁷³ So he comes to see the need of something like Frege's indirect sense. In order to become the subject of a proposition, a complex denoting concept *C* has to occur in another, larger denoting concept '*C*' which denotes *C*. The inverted commas are now supposed to indicate an *addition*.

It is quite essential in this connection, that, although the larger denoting concept '*C*' always has to be *definitely* denoting, the denoting concept *C* which is supposed to be denoted by '*C*', may just as well be *ambiguously* denoting. In the manuscript OF, §35, p. 381, Russell more or less accidentally hits on the question how the supposed additional inverted commas are to be *explained*. In making an attempt to answer this question, he discovers that they cannot be explained at all, because all denoting concepts, whether they do or do not occur in another denoting concept, occur in any event in an entity position, i.e. as denoting.⁷⁴

In discussing the nature of this unsuspected problem, Russell makes an unmarked change from ambiguously denoting concepts such as 'any man' (his very first example) to definitely denoting concepts such as 'the centre of mass of the Solar System' (OF, p.383). Then he makes a second discovery.

70 See 10.4

71 POM, §56, p.53.

72 See 9.2.

73 See: Russell (1903b), pp.320-321 and OF, p.363. The latter passage will be extensively discussed in section 11.

74 See below section 14.

In the case of unambiguously denoting concepts, the problem concerning the explanation of the inverted commas can be avoided by means of a (quasi-Fregean) eliminative paraphrase. For the proposition that ‘the S’ denotes something is equivalent to, and therefore, at least according Frege’s assumption, identical with, the proposition that the class-concept S or the propositional function ‘x is an S’ has one and only one instance. And that may be expressed by means of quantifiers in the way indicated by Frege himself.⁷⁵ Applying this procedure to sentences of the form “The S is P” leads to the ToD. This then is the way the new theory is *conceived*.⁷⁶

In the very same section, Russell also discovers another possible *advantage* of the ToD, namely that it may explain the informative character of identity statements in a much better way than the old theory of denoting concepts has done. However, a few pages later the brand-new theory is *rejected*:

The most convenient view might seem to be to take *everything* and *anything* as primitive ideas, putting

(x). ϕ ‘x.’ = ϕ ‘(everything)’
(x). ϕ ‘x.’ = ϕ ‘(anything)’.

But it seems that on this view *everything* and *anything* are denoting concepts involving all the difficulties considered in 35-39 [i.e. the problem concerning the inverted commas], on account of which we adopted the theory of 40 [the ToD]. We shall have to distinguish between “everything” and everything, i.e. we shall have: “everything” is not everything, but only one thing. Also we shall find that if we attempt to say anything about the *meaning* of “everything”, we must do so by means of a denoting concept which denotes that meaning, and which must not contain that meaning occurring as entity, since when it occurs as entity it stands for its denotation, which is not what we want. These objections, to all appearance, are as fatal here as they were in regard to *the*. Thus it is better to find some other theory.⁷⁷

Russell realizes that the problem concerning the inverted commas is much more general than the ToD seems to suppose. It is indeed possible to eliminate, by means of quantifiers and bound variables, other kinds of denoting concepts as well, such as ‘all men’, ‘some men’ etc., but *not* ‘any entity’. For according

75 Frege (1884), §78, point 4, p.91.

76 See 21.1.

77 OE, §44, p.385.

to POM §87,p.91 *any* entity is intimately connected with the *variable*. Indeed, as seen from Frege's perspective, the variable is supposed to have no meaning on its own account. But that amounts to the same as reducing propositions about anything to singular propositions about propositional functions. However appealing such a view may be from a purely technical perspective, it is at variance with the very principle of Russell's realism, set out in 4.2 and especially with the radical pluralism discussed in 6.1.⁷⁸

7.2 The discovery of crypto-Meinongianism

In OD however, Russell appears to be much more self-confident about the viability of the ToD. He decides to take the variable as fundamental and irreducible. The reduction of all kinds of ambiguously denoting phrases, save the ones beginning with the word “any”, to sentences containing bound variables, is set out without any critical discussion of the former theory of denoting concepts. The main part of the text is devoted to definite descriptions. In a somewhat modified form, the “rather curious” problem concerning the explanation of the inverted commas is discussed in connection with them, mainly in order to prove that neither Russell's own former theory nor Frege's theory of sense and reference is able to adequately explain how George IV could ever have been curious about the possible identity of the author of *Waverley* with Scott.

Reference to Frege is also made in another part of OD, the second part in which his view on the problem of non-being is discussed *together* with Meinong's theory of objects. After having explained how sentences in which definite descriptions occur may be reduced to sentences in which they do not occur, Russell introduces this second part by saying:

Why it is imperative to effect such a reduction, the subsequent discussion will endeavour to show.

The evidence for the above theory is derived from the difficulties which seem unavoidable if we regard denoting phrases as standing for genuine constituents of the propositions in whose verbal expressions they occur.⁷⁹

From the use of the word “imperative” it may be inferred that Russell's attitude towards the ToD had been subjected to a considerable change. Evidently this

⁷⁸ The subject will more extensively be discussed in chapter V. See especially 24.1.

⁷⁹ OD paragraph 10.

is due to a new discovery made shortly before OD was written, namely that the problem of non-being, which happened to be ignored in OF, puts the ToD in a much more favourable light.⁸⁰ It reveals an unsuspected advantage of the new theory and at the same time, as its counterpart, the disadvantage of the presupposition Meinong or the quasi-Meinongian Russell and Frege or the quasi-Fregean Russell have in common.

Which advantage does Russell have in mind? It is mentioned as such in the above-quoted paragraph 10. According to the ToD a proposition expressed by a sentence of the form “The S is P” cannot be *true* unless the denoting phrase “the S” actually denotes something, i.e. unless there is some entity *e* that is such that the proposition expressed by “The S = e” (which has to be construed according to the paraphrase proposed by the ToD) is true.⁸¹ From this it appears that the denotation is actually allowed to play some role of importance. But, and that is the distinctive feature of the ToD, this role is supposed to be *limited* to actual truth or falsity. The damage caused by the absence of the denotation will be limited accordingly. In the case of propositions expressed by simple sentences of the form “The S is P”, it merely results in their *falsity*, which of course does not prevent propositions *about* such relatively simple ones, i.e., propositions in whose verbal expression “the S” has a *secondary* occurrence, from sometimes being true.

We now know *what* is supposed to be an advantage, but not yet *why*. The answer is rather obvious: There will be no truth-value gaps anymore. If we suppose, just as the quasi-Fregean Russell did, that “Zeus” is a definite description in disguise, say “the Z”, and if we suppose as well, for the sake of argument, that all sentences in Greek mythology containing “Zeus” are of the form “The Z is P”, then they are all false. As far as this point is concerned, we have returned to the view of the quasi-Meinongian Russell. There is, however a significant difference. For now we are able to say that Zeus is *not*, without contradicting ourselves and without any need to transcend the realm of being. We simply say that for any entity *e* the proposition expressed by “The Z=e” is false. The gist of the matter is that the true proposition expressed by “Zeus is not”, which indeed *seems* to be about something without being, is in fact a proposition about something *else*, namely the real falsity of an infinite number of real propositions. Neither Meinongian unreal objects nor Fregean truth-value gaps are involved.

When viewed from the perspective of this much longed-for freedom of speech, both Meinong and Frege appear to labour under the same constraint. For trusting appearances, they both *overrate* the importance of the denotation

80 See above 2.3.

81 OD paragraph 28.

in supposing that it belongs to the *subject matter* of the proposition. They both assume as a matter of course that a sentence such as “The smallest prime number is even” does express a proposition *about* the number 2. This number, they think, *must* be available in order to safeguard the proposition’s being true or false at all. If it were not there, the proposition’s being a genuine proposition would be *impossible*. In this respect they regard the denoting phrase “the smallest prime number” as “standing for a genuine constituent” of the proposition.⁸²

As soon as another example is considered, say “The greatest prime number is odd”, the peaceful unanimity between Meinong and Frege suddenly gets disturbed. Meinong believes it does express a true proposition about an unreal object. Frege refuses to admit unreal objects and supposes the thought expressed by this sentence to be neither true nor false.

What is the source of their controversy?

It is to be found in the very presupposition they share. For the assumption that the denotation, if there is any, has to play the role of subject matter, possesses two mutually opposed sides, namely that *if* there is truth or falsity, the denotation must be present, and *if* the denotation is absent, there can neither be truth or falsity. According to the law of contraposition these two implications imply each other; they are equivalent. This equivalence seems to imply that their difference is logically irrelevant. But such a view is not acceptable, for in their actual *application*, they *exclude* each other. Of course, the two-sided principle itself cannot decide how it is to be applied in a particular case such as the above-mentioned example. But as soon as in virtue of other considerations a decision is made in favour of the proposition’s capacity to be false or true or in favour of the complete absence of the denotation, then it actually can be applied. Meinong argues: There is truth or falsity, in this case even truth; *therefore* “the greatest prime number” must have a denotation. Frege, on the contrary, having rejected this conclusion, concludes that Meinong’s premise *must* be wrong: There is no such number; *therefore* there can be no truth or falsity either.

It is quite evident that in drawing this conclusion, Frege makes use of the hypothetical principle that if there is no denotation, then there is no truth or falsity either. But as I have noted above, this principle amounts to the same as the one actually used by Meinong. This other side of Frege’s presupposition

82 And Frege and the quasi-Fregean Russell do so *in spite* of their emphatic claim that the denotation is *not* a constituent of the proposition. As seen from the perspective of the ToD, this claim does not express anything more than a good but powerless intention. That is why the author of OD ignores it.

will be less evident as long as it remains unused.⁸³ That is the reason why I call it *crypto-Meinongianism*. In the same way, an epigone of Sartre who argues, “We are free, therefore God does not exist” could be called a crypto-determinist.

As seen from the perspective of the ToD, crypto-Meinongianism is to be found almost everywhere, most notably in the very principle of Russell’s own realism. What is more, crypto-Meinongianism in fact amounts to the same as Russell’s own *reflexive determinism* set out in 4.2. And it is of course also to be found in his quasi-Meinongianism, as appears from the first sentence of the passage quoted in 4.3: “Homeric gods, chimaeras...all have being, for if they were not entities of a kind, we could make no propositions about them.” Therefore, the general tenor of the official story deserves much more credit than generally supposed. By means of paraphrase the ToD purports to reveal that the real subject matter of propositions is different from their apparent one. In that way it seems to be able to leave undamaged the realm of truth and falsity without being committed to ontological extravagance.

7.3 The official story as ideological distortion of the facts

How much truth is contained in the official story and how much falsity? In the previous discussion I have distinguished three forms of Meinongianism and two ways of “being led” to the ToD. According to me, these distinctions are sufficient to assess the official story. I shall now apply them to the seven elements contained in it, i.e. the elements enumerated in 3.3 as (a1), (a2), (b1), (b2), (c1), (c2) and (c3).

Ad (a1) In how far is it true that Meinong actually represented an extreme and excessive form of realism? As trans-realist he did not do so. For he only wanted to acknowledge objects of knowledge and enquiry beyond what is real. That is why he adopted unreal objects. As an essentialist he opposed these objects to be really distinguished from each other in virtue of their intrinsic essential properties. Assuming true propositions or “objectives” to be real, as

83 But in fact the assumption that there must be an object if there is truth or falsity is also used in Frege (1893), pp.18-20, where an arbitrary reference is assigned to denoting phrases which in their ordinary usage would be vacuous. In this way Frege’s crypto-Meinongianism becomes manifest. In order to prevent truth-value gaps from intruding into his concept-script, Frege needs an object to fulfil the supposed role of the denotation. And that is exactly what is meant in OD paragraph 13, where Russell says: “Another way of taking the same course [i.e., the one taken by Meinong] (so far as our present alternative is concerned) is adopted by Frege, who provides by definition some purely conventional denotation for those cases in which otherwise there would be none.”

an essentialist, he extended the realm of true facts. Not only Zeus's unreality is supposed to be a real fact, but e.g. his being male as well.

As seen from Russell's perspective, the most important presupposition of Meinong's philosophy is quite general. It consists in an assumption Meinong has in common with the un-Meinongian Frege. The latter refuses to accept unreal objects. What is more, he also refuses to accept "Zeus" as a genuine proper name. That is why Frege deserves to be called "un-Meinongian". He rejects both trans-realism and Russell's quasi-Meinongianism. But as a crypto-Meinongian Frege shares with Meinong the assumption that a proposition in whose verbal expression a definite description occurs, cannot be a really true or false proposition unless it is about the object answering the description. As seen from the perspective of the ToD – and the official story is a story from that perspective – crypto-Meinongianism is of the greatest importance. It forces one to adopt objects in order to save truth or falsity. If a proposition is really true or false, then the object about which it seems to be true or false, must be adopted. If it is not, a truth value gap results. That is exactly what the ToD is opposed to in providing a distinction between real and apparent aboutness.

Ad (a2) Did the realist Russell ever adopt views similar to those of Meinong? In POM Russell neither embraced Meinong's essentialism, nor something like it. For it is directly opposed to the nature of his realism. Furthermore, he rejected trans-realism, but accepted something like it, namely the view that e.g. Zeus has being, but does not exist. This quasi-Meinongianism evidently is based on "reflexive determinism", alias crypto-Meinongianism. Zeus *must* be, otherwise it could not be true that he does not exist.

Ad (b1) Were these (quasi-) Meinongian elements in Russell's realism connected with his theory of denoting concepts? No, the only manifest link is that the theory of denoting was of essential import to the rejection of quasi-Meinongianism. Zeus can be banished from the realm of entities in assuming that "Zeus" is not a proper name, but an unambiguously denoting phrase in disguise. That phrase has meaning, but no denotation. In making this turn, Russell obviously was influenced by Frege. He absorbed Fregean views into his own theory of denoting concepts.

Ad (b2) Did Russell's desire to remove Meinongian or quasi-Meinongian elements arise from his own realism, on occasion of a problem in his theory of denoting concepts? No, the "problem of descriptions" on whose occasion the ToD was *conceived*, did not obviously have anything to do with the

Meinongian issue of non-being. This is the most obvious falsity contained in the official story.

Ad (c1) Did the said desire lead to the conception of the ToD? Quite evidently not. But after the conception of the ToD Russell must have discovered that it puts the Meinongian issue in a fresh light. Thanks to the ToD he became aware of crypto-Meinongianism as a presupposition shared by his former quasi-Meinongianism and the quasi-Fregean solution adopted in order to avoid it. This discovery meets a very deep Russellian desire, viz. the desire to deny Zeus's being without getting involved in a contradiction. This greatly contributed to the *adoption* of the ToD. That is the most important kernel of truth contained in the official story. But it did not, as it wrongly suggests, lead to its *conception*.

Ad (c2) Was the ToD adopted immediately after its birth? No, OF is full of doubts concerning the ToD's viability. The discovery of crypto-Meinongianism contributed to Russell's self-confidence, but was not sufficient, as appears from the ambiguous tone of OD, discussed in 2.4. The full adoption of the ToD took place only after 1905. When exactly, I do not know. Anyhow, all later expositions of the ToD differ from OD in *not* containing the GEA, *not* mentioning the issue of denoting and *not* mentioning Frege. The problem of George IV's curiosity remains, but is discussed in an "imperative" way, i.e. by means of a Q.E.D. argument which purports to be of equal justifying force as the KFA.

Ad (c3) Was the ToD's usefulness for avoiding the paradox discovered *after* its full adoption? As far as I can see, the answer must be negative. For the above-mentioned change in attitude towards the ToD must have been occasioned by some new discovery. But which one? Besides the link with the paradox I do not know of any possible other candidate.

Furthermore, this seems to be the only plausible explanation of the riddle of Russell's forgetfulness, discussed in 1.5 and 3.2. For if (c3) were true, then Russell's distortion of the facts would be without any incentive or "reason". That is why in my opinion the rise of the official story belongs to the ToD's full adoption. Why forget the true origin of the ToD unless it actually casts a shadow on its glory? I shall explore this shady side in the following part of this dissertation.

PART TWO

In Frege's Companionship Towards, Through and Beyond the Gray's Elegy Argument

Chapter III

Genesis and Nature of Another Quasi-Fregean View

8 From Meinong to Frege: a consequential shift of emphasis

8.1 Uncontroversial evidence provided by OF

In the previous chapter I have discussed the conflict between the manuscript OF and the official story promoted by the later Russell. I have done so primarily with an eye to the part played by Meinong. In the present and the next two chapters the same conflict will be treated, but primarily with respect to the view the part played by Frege. In order to explain what this shift of emphasis means, I shall start with a short overview of uncontroversial data, relevant to both chapters. By “uncontroversial” I mean their being acknowledged by all commentators, including myself, who have taken notice of OF. Therefore these data may serve as a starting point, which is common in two ways, namely common to the subject matter of the previous chapter and the three succeeding it as well as common to my opponents and myself. It precedes both bifurcations. That is why it may help to clarify how the shift from Meinong to Frege affects the attitude of the adherents of the unofficial view towards the official view. And it may equally help to explain my corresponding change of attitude to both the official and the unofficial story.

In the official story Meinong plays a prominent role as the opponent from whom Russell liberated himself by means of the ToD. As we have seen Frege is not mentioned in that story at all. The manuscript OF contains evidence that is incompatible with this official story. Primarily and most conspicuously, it disproves the role attributed to Meinong. For in OF Meinong is not mentioned at all. And that is not by accident. He is not mentioned because the very issue that could have occasioned Russell to use his name, the problem of non-being, fails to be discussed in it. Maybe that is just an accident. Maybe Russell could have paid attention to that issue. But in fact he did not. In fact he was led to the ToD by the desire to avoid another problem, namely the curious problem that is also discussed as the GEA in OD. Parts of the corresponding passage in OF are literally the same as the parts of the GEA. Evidently Russell made use

of OF in writing OD: in these corresponding passages Frege is not mentioned at all, whereas in OD he plays a rather prominent role.

8.2 Two ‘unofficial’ conclusions

From these incontestable data all commentators have drawn two conclusions, which in my opinion are not in the least warranted:

- a) It is necessary *and sufficient* to correct the official story by a *purely material* change. In other words: the problem that is supposed to have led Russell to the ToD is to be substituted by another one, namely the curious difficulty discussed in OF and the GEA.
- b) This substitution has an unlooked-for *consequence* that is supposed to be inevitable, namely that not only Meinong is to be removed from the official story, but equally *anyone else*. For the problem associated with his name is to be replaced by a problem that is not associated with anyone’s name, save the name of Russell himself. According to the unofficial story, in the process that led Russell to the ToD, he was in fact *lonelier* than he has suggested. Of course the adherents of this view cannot deny that the names of both Meinong and Frege do occur in OD. But – and that is the essential point – their respective roles are supposed to be reduced to external public opponents of the ToD, who appeared on the stage *post festum*, i.e. in the course of Russell’s attempt to publicly defend a theory which had been conceived and adopted in an unaccompanied soliloquy.

8.3 Criticism of the first conclusion

The first conclusion is based on the assumption that the form of the official story is in any extent unassailable and cannot be affected by new material. The formula “Russell was led to the ToD by the desire to avoid...” is to be preserved, whereas *Meinong’s unduly realm of being* is to be replaced by *the curious problem discovered in OF and discussed in the GEA*. The latter is supposed to have played *exactly the same role* as the former should have played according to the official story.

In the previous chapters I have argued that this lack of criticism of the official story’s *form* leads to an excessive rejection of its *material*. In the genesis of the ToD Meinong is supposed to have played no significant part at all. This criticism is so severe that it prevents its adherents from questioning any further

the form of the story told by the autobiographical Russell. What is more, it equally prevents them from investigating and explaining the possible motive behind such a remarkable distortion of the historical facts. And finally it prevents them from accepting this distortion of the facts by Russell himself as itself a fact that belongs to the history of the ToD.

The view I have advocated simply consists in challenging the *form* of the official story by means of the distinction between conception and adoption of the ToD. In my opinion not only the evidence provided by OF, but also evidence derived from OD itself, may justify such an approach. It enables a much more mitigated criticism of the *material* side of the official story: although Meinong did not play any role in the *conception* of the ToD, he actually did in its *acceptance*.

As seen from this perspective the question concerning the motive behind Russell's distortion of the facts can be asked and tentatively answered. His story is ideological: it springs from the desire to add a little extra to growing but still incomplete self-confidence. Essentially it is based on the repression of doubts, namely the doubts that in my opinion are to be found in both OF and OD. Russell wanted to forget that the discovery of the ToD's capacity for rendering aid to a possible solution of the paradox *made* him fully adopt the ToD. He wanted to believe that he embraced it somewhat earlier, independently of the theory of types. And he succeeded in believing what he wanted to believe by forgetting what he wanted to forget. This move is not criminal, but rather subliminal. Its possibility is based on the reflexivity of deception and self-deception which is often forgotten (especially by Hegelians). You cannot successfully forget what you desire to forget unless you forget the desire to forget it as well.

The official story makes us believe that the story itself is just an external account, i.e. a retrospective of a past and completed process. Of course, the person who reminds us of that particular piece of history happens to be the protagonist in that history. The autobiographical Russell is obviously aware of this identity. He does not pretend to speak about someone else. But –and that is the sticking point –he has forgotten that his account distorts the facts in a very specific way, namely in a way which exactly meets the desire to fully adopt the ToD. As such, not in virtue of its both being told by Russell and being about Russell, but in virtue of its being the finishing touch of the ToD's adoption, the official story is an essential part of the history it purports to describe. If my analysis is right, the rise of the official story coincides with the final and complete adoption of the ToD. It made that adoption possible. Therefore it did not originate in 1944 when Russell wrote *My Mental Development*, but at some time between 1905 and 1910. That is why it is in

complete accordance with the disappearance of the GEA from all expositions of the ToD written after OD. The official story was virtually present in *Principia* already.

8.4 Criticism of the second conclusion

The second conclusion (b) only seems to be an inevitable consequence of the first (a) as long as the assumption is taken for granted that *not only the un-Meinongian Frege, but Frege in general is absent from OF in exactly the same way as Meinong*. That is why we are confronted with a new issue: the issue of Russell's supposed *loneliness*. It is quite different from what has been of central importance in the previous chapters. There I have been primarily concerned with Russell's supposed *self-confidence*. What on first thoughts seems to be an insignificant shift of emphasis, the transition from Meinong (and Frege) to Frege (and Meinong), now appears to be quite consequential. It consists in moving from one opposition, namely doubt versus certainty, to another one: companionship versus loneliness. And the possible companion is of course Frege.

The adherents of the unofficial view have all been surprised by OF. The manuscript surprised them on account of the absence of the problem associated with Meinong's name, not on account of the supposed absence of Frege. The belief that Frege did not play any significant role in the genesis of the ToD existed long before OF became accessible. In spite of their controversies all commentators have assumed it as a matter of course. It seemed to go without saying that in OD Frege is only put on the scene as a public opponent, not as a companion who in some way or other could have helped Russell in conceiving or adopting the ToD. The hot issue was something else, namely the possible *validity* of the GEA as an attack on Frege's theory of sense and reference. The discovery of OF in 1980 has not significantly changed this general agreement.

What is more, this consonance is in complete harmony with the official story! For in it, Russell is equally silent about Frege. According to the adherents of the unofficial view, this silence is harmless anyway. That is why they tend to be just as silent about this silence as Russell himself. Maybe some defenders of the unofficial story have observed that in all expositions of the ToD written after OD both the GEA *and Frege* have disappeared. Anyhow, when faced with this fact, they remain faithful to their creed. They will explain it as a change in Russell's strategy, i.e. as a change in the way he preferred to *defend* the ToD. And according to them, that does not have anything to do with the ToD's *genesis*.

8.5 Two unnoticed passages in OF

In order to challenge this view, I shall in the course of this second part discuss two passages in OF which in my opinion are sufficient to prove Frege's involvement in the genesis of the ToD. The first passage (to be discussed in the present chapter, see below 11.2) *precedes* the one corresponding to the GEA. Although in it Frege is not actually mentioned, Russell must have had him in mind; for the issue that could have occasioned him to use Frege's name is present. It is true, Russell is concerned with the fundamental implications of his own theory of denoting concepts, but in that connection he obviously makes a quasi-Fregean move, the move inspired by the *Frege of indirect sense*.

In the second passage, to be discussed in chapter V, 24.1, Frege is actually mentioned twice. This happens a few pages *after* the conception and possible rejection of the ToD. The issue at stake is the question in how far the variable can be taken as more fundamental than denoting in virtue of a supposed meaning. The Frege mentioned in this connection is evidently different from both the one of indirect sense and the un-Meinongian one, who actually occurs in OD but not in OF. For the sake of convenience I shall call the Frege connected with the issue of the variable *the fundamental Frege*.

In the previous chapter I have distinguished three possible forms of Meinongianism in order to gauge the amount of truth concealed in what the official story *suggests*, namely that thanks to the ToD Russell liberated himself from his *own* Meinongianism. In the remaining part of this book I shall proceed in the same way: distinguishing three relevant forms of Fregeanism in order to make clear how much truth is contained in what the official story is *silent* about: Frege's actual role in the genesis of the ToD, i.e. both in its conception and in its possible adoption.

The result of my enquiry is that the official story's silence about Frege is less far innocent as is generally supposed. It distorts the historical facts to the same extent as does its silence about the problem discussed in the GEA. Therefore, besides the riddle of Russell's having forgotten the problem which actually occasioned the ToD's conception (see 1.5 and 3.2), another riddle is now to be acknowledged: the riddle of Russell's having forgotten Frege's companionship. How is the latter to be explained? In my opinion, the very reason for which that riddle is to be acknowledged also provides its solution. Frege was to be forgotten because he was too intimately involved in the embarrassing genesis of the ToD. He was to be forgotten together with the curious problem discovered by Russell as quasi-Fregean, i.e. as inspired by the Frege of indirect sense. And the un-Meinongian Frege was to be forgotten on account of his kinship with the Frege of indirect sense. Both represent the only Frege who

actually occurs in OD: the Frege of the theory of sense and reference as applied to unambiguously denoting phrases. Finally, the fundamental Frege was to be forgotten because of his being too far away from the fundamental Russell, the Russell of the unrestricted variable (see 24.1). Eventually he could not assist Russell in fashionably styling his brand new theory. As I hope to show in the final chapter, the fundamental Frege actually played a significant, but unsuccessful role in the *possible* adoption of the ToD.

8.6 Approach and tenor of this chapter

In 1958 Geach recommended the readers of OD to ignore Russell's use of Frege's name.⁸⁴ There actually are two good reasons why he might have given that advice, namely that the way Frege is dealt with in OD is misleading indeed and that the differences between Russell and Frege are probably much more fundamental than Russell himself ever realized. But I do not accept the third reason behind Geach's recommendation, namely that the core of OD is purely Russellian and as such has nothing to do with Frege. Ever since 1980 many, if not all of the commentators have assumed that OF justifies Geach's opinion. In the previous subsections I have explained why I strongly disagree with this premature conclusion. That is why I want to replace Geach's advice by another one, namely: *not* to ignore Russell's casual use *and his omission* of Frege's name in OD *and* OF.

The two above-mentioned passages from OF in which Frege is concerned, both throw a fresh light on corresponding passages in OD. They both show that Frege is *present* where he is supposed to be *absent*. They both show why and in which way Russell's use of Frege's name in OD is misleading: not as Geach seems to suppose, on account of its mere existence, but on account of its being *too restricted*. The risk of misunderstanding the limited part Russell has allowed Frege to play in OD is very grave indeed. But it cannot be avoided by raising the restriction to a maximum. For if there is anything unnatural about Frege's presence in OD, it is only to be found in the limitations imposed upon him, not in the mere fact that he is allowed to enter the discussion. He accompanied Russell from the very start. At the very moment when the curious problem was discovered from which the ToD originated, Frege was, intellectually speaking, standing next to Russell.

During the years preceding the composition of OD, Russell had been deeply concerned with both unsuspected similarities and unsuspected differences between Frege and himself. From 1902 to 1904 he had corresponded with

84 Geach, P.T. (1958), p.72.

Frege and during that period he had written a rather extensive appendix attached to *Principles*, entitled “The Logical and Arithmetical Doctrines of Frege”.⁸⁵ The most recent letter received from Frege is dated 13th of November 1904. Russell replied it 12 December 1904. After that date, their correspondence stopped, to be resumed only for insignificant reasons in 1912. The manuscript OF is written in June 1905, i.e. only six months after Russell’s last reply.⁸⁶ I presume that during that period, in his mind, Russell continued to converse with Frege.

In 1958, when Geach put forward the above-mentioned advice, the correspondence between Russell and Frege was not yet available. Still the Appendix A of *Principles* was certainly available, as was Russell’s reference in OD (paragraph 3, footnote) to the second section of that Appendix (POM §476). Whether Geach ever took notice of this reference, I do not know. At any rate, he could have done so. But in my opinion that would not have been sufficient to change his mind. For the fourth and most important reason behind his recommendation is not to be found in the lacking access to sources now available, nor in any lack of attention to the then available sources. The real reason is much more important and interesting: it is based on the belief that significant points of contact between Russell and Frege could not have existed given their fundamental differences. And this assumption, for its part, is based on the quite general view that whatever *seems* to be contradictory must *be* contradictory and is therefore impossible. It amounts to the same as the tenet that in logic there cannot be any surprise. If something is logically possible, then it *must* be *evidently* possible. Elements that seem to contradict each other must, on pain of contradiction, lie apart from each other.

This then, is the dogma of externalism or the dogma of undialectical thought mentioned in 0.2. It is the most fundamental assumption to which my view is opposed. The dogma that I have challenged in the previous chapters, the belief that OD must have been written *after* the full adoption of the ToD, is equally the result of a special application of the dogma of externalism. For it is based on the assumption that whatever jeopardizes the glory of the ToD must, on pain of contradiction, be external to its origin. Indeed, it *seems* to be contradictory that the very same problem that occasioned the ToD’s conception has also prevented Russell from adopting it. *Not* yielding to the temptation to conclude that ‘therefore’ it must be impossible, constitutes the dialectical slant of my analysis. It results in the rejection of the first dogma of

85 For Frege’s correspondence with Russell see Frege (1976), pp.200-252.

86 The only exchange of letters after that date took place in 1912, but it is intellectually insignificant. Russell invites Frege to give a lecture at the Mathematical Congress in Cambridge. Frege politely excuses himself.

absence, derived from the official view: the dogma of the absence from OD and OF of Russell's doubts concerning the viability of the ToD. In view of the GEA, it results in taking the word "curious", which occurs in its introduction, as revealing.

With regard to the GEA, the rejection of the second dogma derived from the official story, the dogma of Frege's absence from the genesis of the ToD, is not less consequential. For it means that Frege is present *in* the Russellian version of the GEA. As I hope to show in the next chapter, it is not possible to understand the GEA as applied to Russell's own theory of denoting concepts, without taking into account the Frege who actually, as appears from OF, influenced Russell, the Frege of indirect sense. The very first passage, in which Russell takes notice of this Frege, is to be found in POM §476. And this section of POM is referred to in OD, footnote to paragraph 3. In POM §476 Frege's view is discussed from the perspective of POM §56.⁸⁷ There the story about the genesis of the GEA has to start. There, as I hope to show in chapter IV, the key to deciphering its secret code is to be found.

In the last chapter I shall continue the discussion of Russell's use of Frege's name, but from a radically different perspective, namely with respect to the role played by the fundamental Frege, who is present in OF and systematically ignored in OD. In that connection attention will be paid to what, at least in my opinion, may be supposed to be the most fundamental difference between Russell and Frege. I shall argue, that in spite of it and in spite of Russell's having misunderstood it, the GEA, or at least part of it, is actually applicable to Frege's theory of sense and reference, even more so than to Russell's own theory of denoting concepts.

9 Russell's innocent view as starting point

9.1 From OD towards the GEA's background

The very first entrance of Frege in OD is to be found in its third paragraph, the one in which Russell purports to announce the composition of his article:

The course of my argument will be as follows. I shall begin by stating the theory I intend to advocate *; I shall then discuss the theories of Frege and Meinong, showing why neither of them satisfies me;

⁸⁷ This connection might be overlooked on account of an evident misprint in the first sentence of §476. For there reference is made to §96, which does not have anything to do with the issue at stake. Evidently, Russell had §56 in mind.

Here evidently the reader of OD is introduced to the un-Meinongian Frege. But the footnote indicated by the asterisk contains an entry which leads to the Frege of indirect sense. The text of this footnote runs as follows:

*I have discussed this subject in *Principles of Mathematics*, Chap.V, and §476. The theory there advocated is very nearly the same as Frege's and is quite different from the theory to be advocated in what follows.

The two passages from *Principles* are different in nature. Its chapter V is entitled "Denoting" and contains Russell's own former theory. Section 476, however, is part of Appendix A, entitled "The Logical and Arithmetical Doctrines of Frege". It is the second section of that Appendix and bears the subtitle "Meaning and indication". It is the only one dedicated to Frege's theory of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, or 'sense' and 'reference', as I have so far translated these terms. There, Russell starts his exposition in saying:

The distinction between meaning (*Sinn*) and indication (*Bedeutung*)* is roughly, though not exactly, equivalent to my distinction between a concept as such and what the concept denotes (§56).

Now, in section 56, which is the first in chapter V, the distinction between 'A concept as such and what the concept denotes' is explained as follows:

A concept *denotes* when, if it occurs in a proposition, the proposition is not *about* the concept, but about a term connected in a certain peculiar way with the concept. If I say "I met a man", the proposition is not about *a man*: this is a concept which does not walk the streets, but lives in the shadowy limbo of the logic-books. What I met was a thing, not a concept, an actual man with a tailor and a bank-account or a public-house and a drunken wife. Again the proposition "any finite number is odd or even" is plainly true; yet the *concept* "any finite number" is neither odd nor even. It is only particular numbers that are odd or even; there is not, in addition to these, another entity, *any number*, which is either odd or even, and if there were, it is plain that it could not be odd and could not be even. Of the *concept* "any number", almost all the propositions that contain the *phrase* "any number" are false. If we wish to speak of the concept, we have to indicate the fact by italics or inverted commas.

Apart from its terminology, the last sentence of this passage very much

resembles the GEA's second paragraph (OD paragraph 19)⁸⁸. The text runs as follows:

When we wish to speak about the *meaning* of a denoting phrase, as opposed to its *denotation*, the natural mode of doing so is by inverted commas. Thus we say:

The centre of mass of the solar system is a point, not a denoting complex;
 "The centre of mass of the solar system" is a denoting complex, not a point.
 Or again,
 The first line of Gray's Elegy states a proposition.
 "The first line of Gray's Elegy" does not state a proposition.

In my opinion it is rather doubtful whether this part of the GEA's introduction is applicable to Frege's theory. But for the time being, I want to leave that question aside. For in the present chapter I am not concerned with the GEA's exegesis, let alone with its possible application to Frege, but only with an enquiry into its quasi-Fregean *origin*. At any rate, the above-quoted passage is actually applicable to *Russell*. Of course, it is not *meant* as a description of the view expressed in *Principles* §56, but it actually corresponds to it. In order to inform the reader of OD on the question "What is that curious problem, of which you suppose to have had it in common with Frege, concerned with?" Russell makes use of an exposition of his own former view. For the sake of convenience, I shall call it the *innocent view*.

9.2 The innocence of the innocent view

According to §56, there is in fact no problem at all. Normally a proposition containing a denoting concept will not be about that concept, but about what it denotes. However, in some particular cases, a proposition containing a denoting concept may be about the concept itself. It may be important to observe that the possible human need to speak about denoting concepts is

⁸⁸ Of course, also another difference is involved: in the GEA only unambiguously denoting concepts are discussed, in POM ambiguously denoting concepts are supposed to be of greater importance. See 13.3 and 21.3.

much more irrelevant to Russell's view than his turn of phrase suggests.⁸⁹ In this respect the innocent view is not innocent at all. It is based on the idea that the being of something which is such that nothing is true or false about it, is *impossible*. For if there were any entity like that, i.e. an entity that does not occur as subject in any proposition, then that very entity would on that account occur as subject in the proposition that it does not occur as subject in any proposition, which is an evident contradiction.⁹⁰ Therefore, if there are denoting concepts at all, there must be propositions *about* them. This necessity does not have anything to do with *our* need to change the subject matter of our discourse.

The innocence of the innocent view is due to Russell's assumption that denoting concepts may occur as subjects of propositions in exactly the same way as other concepts. This requires an explanation. According to *Principles*, a concept is whatever *may* occur in a proposition otherwise than as subject or 'term' of that proposition. Concepts are different from *things*. For a thing is defined as what *cannot* occur in a proposition otherwise than as its subject. In the proposition expressed by the sentence "Socrates is human", Socrates occurs as subject. In Russell's terminology he is a 'thing' because he cannot occur otherwise.⁹¹ The only way a proposition can have to do with Socrates is: being *about* him. The said proposition has not only to do with Socrates, but with what is meant by "is" and "human" as well. However it is not about these constituents. That is why they are concepts, not things.

But although in this particular proposition they do not occur in the same way as Socrates does, there *must* be other propositions in which they do occur in that way. If this requirement were not fulfilled, these constituents would not be genuine *entities* at all. They would be such that nothing is true or false about them. Socrates has no need of any other proposition in order to prove that he is a real entity. For he actually occurs and cannot occur otherwise than as subject. But what corresponds to the word "human" only proves, by the way it occurs in the above proposition, that it is not a thing but a concept. In order to prove that it is an entity, it is in need of a proposition in which it actually

89 See Landini (1998), p.73, who has rightly criticized previous commentators of the GEA in saying: "The gate to the fortress was open all the time. We have only to ask: Are denoting concepts capable of the two-fold nature essential to concepts generally? According to *Principles* the answer has to be "yes." Its fundamental doctrine – whatever is, can occur as term of a proposition – requires it. Therein lies the secret. The answer "yes" spells doom for the theory of denoting concepts." Makin (2000) has also adopted this view.

90 See POM §49, p.46.

91 In this respect, things are like substances. However they are not supposed to have anything in them. Cf. 18.5 and 22.2.

occurs as term or as entity, i.e. as something that the proposition is about. Now according to Russell this requirement can easily be met. For in the proposition expressed by “Humanity belongs to Socrates”, the said concept actually occurs as entity. This proposition is not a simple singular subject predicate proposition, but a relational proposition, i.e. a proposition about two different entities, namely humanity and Socrates.⁹²

It may seem that this proposition is not about exactly the same entity as the predicate that occurs as predicate in ‘Socrates is human’. But according to Russell the transformation from “human” into “humanity” only indicates a change in occurrence, i.e. not a change in *what* occurs, but only in *how* it occurs.⁹³ In fact, “humanity” is a *proper name derived* from an expression which is not a name at all, namely “human”. Things are represented by proper names anyhow. Concepts are represented by proper names if they occur in the same way as a thing.

Let us now turn to denoting concepts. The first point to be observed is that although there may be and actually is something special about denoting concepts, there is nothing special about the reason why they deserve to be called “concepts”. They are simply called like that because, like all other concepts, they differ from things in being able to occur otherwise in a proposition than as its subject. Now, normally a denoting concept occurs in such a way that the proposition in which it occurs is not about it, but about what it denotes. That is sufficient to prove that it is a concept.

The second point about a denoting concept to be observed is, that for it to occur as a concept amounts to the same as for it to occur as denoting, i.e., in the way it normally occurs. Denoting something else and not being itself a subject are equivalent.

The third point to be observed is that, like all other concepts, denoting concepts must be able, on pain of losing their right to be called entities, to occur otherwise than they normally do. There must be propositions in which they occur as such, i.e. as being themselves a subject or term of those propositions. Taking into account the second point, this is only possible if denoting concepts are able to occur as *non-denoting*. This however is less special than it appears to be. For just in the same way a predicate can only

92 According to Russell every relational proposition is about more than one entity. But not every proposition about more than one entity is relational. “Brown and Jones are two of Mrs. Smith’s suitors” is about more than one subject, but it is not relational. In the latter case order is relevant (see POM §219), in the former case it is not. This marks a significant difference with Frege. See below 22.

93 See POM §49, p.46.

occur as subject, if it occurs as non-predicative, a relation can only occur as subject, if it occurs as non-relating.

After these remarks the innocence of the innocent view may be described as follows. It consists in the quite natural assumption that denoting concepts are capable of occurring as subject in essentially the same way as other concepts, namely in dropping their special character. In language this change will be expressed in becoming a *proper name derived from the denoting phrase* in the same way as “humanity” appeared to be derived from “human”. The inverted commas (mentioned in POM §56 and in OD par. 19) or italics (mentioned in POM §56) are to be construed in this way according to the innocent view. They are supposed to play exactly the same role as the addition of “ity” to “human”: the role of *indicating* a change of occurrence. They do not represent a material addition to what occurs, but merely a change in the *way* of occurrence. The inverted commas do not contribute anything to that change, but only “indicate” it as a “fact”.

10 Frege’s difference from Russell as explained in §476

10.1 Why the innocent view cannot be incorporated into Frege’s theory

If the above-sketched analysis of the innocent view is right, then it is purely Russellian. It cannot be integrated into the conceptual framework of Frege’s theory. For it is quite essential to the latter that the distinction between sense and reference is applied to all and only all genuine expressions which are supposed to express a judgeable content, i.e. something which is true or false. In the 23.1 I shall more extensively discuss what this means and how it is, at least partly, misunderstood by the Russell of OD on account of his neglect of the fundamental Frege. In this connection however it is sufficient to observe that according to Frege both complex definite descriptions such as “the centre of mass of the solar system at the first instant of the twentieth century” and simple proper names such as “Berlin” are such genuine expressions. In other words, the distinction between sense and reference is not based on complexity.

This is sufficient to explain why a Fregean or even quasi-Fregean version of the innocent view held by Russell in POM §56 is impossible. For according to that view the meaning of a definitely denoting phrase, which has both meaning and denotation, can occur as subject of a proposition, a fact that is indicated by the phrase’s being transformed into a proper name of that

meaning. That proper name will just name that meaning without *having* any meaning itself, for although derived from a denoting phrase, it is not itself a denoting phrase. The distinction between meaning and denotation cannot be applied to it. Therefore, as soon as the Fregean view is adopted that the distinction between sense and reference is equally applicable to proper names, Russell's innocent view simply does not work.

10.2 Harmless endless regress in Frege's theory

If all genuine expressions that are supposed to express a proposition, i.e., a true or false thought or judgeable content, have both sense and reference, then the only way to speak about a sense will have to be essentially different from the way discussed in the previous subsection. For then a certain sense must be named by an expression which itself *has* a sense. It will name what it names not immediately like a Russellian proper name, but it will name its reference in virtue of the sense expressed by it. And this latter sense must be different from the sense named by it. For one and the same sense cannot have different references. For example, if we want to name the sense expressed by "the Morningstar", we want to name a sense that has the Morningstar as reference. Now, the only way to do so successfully is by means of an expression that does not express a sense referring to the Morningstar. For we do not want to speak about the Morningstar, but about one of the senses which point to the Morningstar. Which one? Not the one expressed by "the Eveningstar", but the one expressed by "the Morningstar". And it is not difficult to do so: we already have done so by means of the expression "the sense expressed by the 'Morningstar'".

This Fregean view leads to an endless regress. But it is a harmless regress, because it does not prevent us from successfully referring to whichever sense we want to speak about. Speaking about the sense expressed by "the Morningstar" is not a never-ending process. But mentioning all the senses involved in speaking about the sense expressed by "the Morningstar" actually is an endless process. For in speaking about that sense we have to express a new, as yet unmentioned sense. And if we want to speak about *that* sense, we have to do so by means of *another*, as yet unmentioned sense, etc.

According to Frege – and in this respect he does not differ from Russell – senses or meanings are not created by us or by our language. They are expressed or mentioned by our language. There is an actual infinity of senses. Only a finite number of those senses are actually expressed or mentioned. And although the number of actually expressed senses may indefinitely be

increased, it will always be finite and remain greater than the number of actually mentioned senses.

10.3 Direct and indirect sense and reference

Frege also discusses another way of mentioning a sense, which leads to the same harmless kind of endless regress. As seen from both his and Russell's perspective, this method of referring to senses or meanings is much more important. In his article *On Sense and Reference*, Frege wants to argue that identity of reference (*Bedeutung*) implies identity of truth-value. In order to do so, he has to discuss cases in which Leibniz' law, i.e., the so-called principle of substitution, *seems* to be violated. He explains these cases by the assumption that in *oratio obliqua* the very same expression, which normally expresses a certain sense, indicates that sense by means of a sense derived from the sense it indicates. The latter is called the *indirect sense*.⁹⁴

This part of Frege's theory may be illustrated on occasion of puzzle (1) in OD, which actually is very Fregean in character.⁹⁵ In paragraph 15 that puzzle is stated as follows:

If *a* is identical with *b*, whatever is true of the one is true of the other, and either may be substituted for the other in any proposition without altering the truth or falsehood of that proposition. Now George IV wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley*; and in fact Scott *was* the author of *Waverley*. Hence we may substitute *Scott* for *the author of 'Waverley'*, and thereby prove that George IV wished to know whether Scott was Scott. Yet an interest in the law of identity can hardly be attributed to the first gentleman of Europe.

Frege's solution of this puzzle would be as follows. In the sentence "George IV wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley*", neither the proper name "Scott" nor the denoting phrase "the author of *Waverley*" denotes what it normally denotes.⁹⁶ For both occur in indirect speech. And in indirect speech "Scott" names the sense which in direct speech is expressed by that proper name. The same applies to "the author of *Waverley*". Therefore the substitution of "Scott" for "the author of *Waverley*" is not legitimate. For

94 See Frege (1892a), p.145.

95 In the next chapter, however, this will be put in perspective. See 20.5.

96 In order to accommodate this view, I use Russell's "denote". Frege would prefer "determine" (*bestimmen*) or "correspond" (*entsprechen*).

although the direct reference of “Scott” is the same as the direct reference of “the author of *Waverley*”, the direct sense of “Scott” is not the same as the direct sense of “the author of *Waverley*”. Therefore the indirect reference of the two expressions is not the same either. Indirect speech does not prove that the principle of substitution is false, but that the condition of its applicability, namely sameness of reference, is not fulfilled.

10.4 Russell’s awareness of the difference between Frege and himself

I have not only discussed this Fregean solution of puzzle (1) in order to illustrate the distinction between direct and indirect sense and reference, but also in order to make clear both the role and the genesis of the GEA. The *role* of the GEA in the setting of OD is: to prove that puzzle (1) cannot be solved by adherents of the old theory of meaning and denotation as put forward by Frege and Russell. It cannot be solved in spite of the firm belief of its adherents that they are able to do so. For in their solution they presuppose that the meaning or sense can occur as something a proposition is about. The GEA starts in challenging that innocent assumption by revealing an unsuspected problem. And in its two last paragraphs (OD, par. 24 and 25) it concludes that on that account the proposed solution of puzzle (1) fails.⁹⁷ But the GEA is neither written by Russell and Frege together, nor by a third person different from both. It is written by Russell. But it could not have been written by the innocent Russell of POM §56 who in §476 takes notice of the somewhat different Fregean view and supposes it to be equally innocent (see quotation below). Therefore, the question is to be asked how the innocent Russell lost his innocence. It amounts to the same as the question concerning the *genesis* of the GEA. As far as I know all commentators have assumed that it is to be located in the corresponding passage in OF, which indeed starts in a quite innocent tone of voice. But – and that is the other reason why I have discussed the Fregean solution of puzzle (1) – the Russell who is on the verge of discovering the unsuspected difficulty discussed in the GEA, is significantly less innocent than the innocent Russell of POM §56. Evidently he has made a quasi-Fregean move. In my opinion it is impossible to fully understand the GEA without having made an attempt to first understand the nature of this move and the reasons behind it.

There are several reasons why Frege never lost *his* own innocence in this respect. Even if he had been aware of a Russellian alternative, he would not

97 See 20.5. There I shall show that the situation is in fact more complicated.

have been able to incorporate it into the conceptual framework of his own theory. Besides, he never wrote an appendix on the works of Russell. Nor did he ever seriously try to understand Russell's works. Finally, he never made an attempt to explain the notion of indirect sense. Russell, on the other hand, actually wrote an appendix on the works of Frege and very seriously tried to understand them. In the course of that process the innocent Russell at least lost something of his original innocence. For in studying *On Sense and Reference*, he realized that another view was at least *possible*. In the mentioned second section of the Appendix, POM §476, he takes notice of the two above-mentioned interrelated differences. The first of them is very well known and often-discussed; it is also to be found in OD par. 11, second footnote: it states that Frege's theory is more sweeping. For the distinction between sense and reference is applied to both definite descriptions and proper names. The second difference is not mentioned in OD. However, in my opinion it is a quite important clue to understanding the GEA. This mostly forgotten difference is a consequence of the first, namely that according to Frege, a sense or meaning can only occur as subject of a proposition, if it is referred to by another sense or meaning. And, as I have explained above, this involves a harmless infinite regress. In POM §476, p.502, Russell says:

This theory of indication is more sweeping and general than mine, as appears from the fact that *every* proper name is supposed to have the two sides. It seems to me that only such proper names as are derived from concepts by means of *the* can be said to have meaning, and that such words as *John* merely indicate without meaning. If one allows, as I do, that concepts can be objects and have proper names, it seems fairly evident that their proper names, as a rule, will indicate them without having any distinct meaning; but the opposite view, though it leads to an endless regress, does not appear to be logically impossible.⁹⁸

98 The turn of phrase "that concepts can be objects and have proper names" reveals a quite fundamental misunderstanding. It will be discussed in 23.1. Here however, it is rather harmless. Russell uses the Fregean word "object" as synonymous with "subject", i.e. something the proposition is about.

11 The quasi-Fregean move in ‘On Fundamentals’

11.1 Possibility of the quasi-Fregean view

Although not even something like the view of the innocent Russell can be integrated into Frege’s theory, something like the latter can be integrated into the former. The essence of the Fregean approach is: making use of the distinction between sense and reference in order to explain how the sense may occur as subject of a proposition. This approach may be adopted in the theory of denoting concepts without accepting Frege’s equal treatment of proper names and definite descriptions. Frege’s theory must lead to mediatism because it is sweeping. But mediatism as such is not in need of such a sweeping theory.

Retaining the basic conceptual framework of Russell’s theory, such a quasi-Fregean shift could be effectuated in the assumption that after all, there is something special about denoting concepts. A non-denoting concept as such can occur as entity without being denoted. But, according to this possible view, a denoting concept cannot occur as subject of a proposition unless it is denoted by another denoting concept. This assumption equally involves a harmless infinite regress.

If it is adopted, the inverted commas are to be explained in a different way. According to the innocent Russell (see 9.2), they are to be construed as an addition similar to the ending “ity” to “human”. In other words: they *are*, of course, an addition, namely an addition to the denoting phrase that is put between them. Nevertheless, they are supposed *not* to *symbolize* an addition, but something else, namely a change in occurrence of the denoting concept expressed by the denoting phrase between them. Adding inverted commas to a denoting phrase results in a proper, i.e. non-expressive name of the meaning, which is normally expressed by that denoting phrase. That is why, according to this innocent view, italics are more appropriate than inverted commas. For they change what is italicized without adding anything to it.

According to the quasi-Fregean view, however, inverted commas are supposed to be less misleading than italics. For if the meaning we want to speak about is to be denoted, not just named, then it is to be denoted by a denoting concept, which is different from –and larger than the denoting concept we want to speak about. To the latter something must be added in order to get the former. For a denoting concept cannot denote itself. Any denoting concept denotes something else. Furthermore, the denoting concept by means of which another denoting concept is made the subject of a proposition must be somehow derived from it, like Frege’s indirect sense is supposed to be derived from the direct sense. In this view, there is a real

addition to be symbolized. The most appropriate way symbolizing it is by additional symbols. Therefore inverted commas will do better than italics.

11.2 Actual adoption of the quasi-Fregean view and the reason behind it

Up to now I have only discussed the *possibility* of replacing the innocent view adopted in POM §56 by a quasi-Fregean view, i.e., a view similar to the one discussed in POM §476. There Russell takes notice of the principle Frege's approach is based on. But he does not feel any need to adopt it. Therefore, two questions may be asked, namely whether he ever *actually* adopted it and if so, *why*. These two questions are both answered by the passage in OF mentioned in section 8. It occurs about 19 pages before the discovery of the problem, which gave rise to the ToD's conception. Whether in it the shift from the innocent to the quasi-Fregean view actually took place, I do not know. Maybe it is to be construed as just a reminder of an earlier change.⁹⁹ Anyhow, in its margin Russell has put the words: "*Important principle*" (see CP vol.4, p. 703). The text (CP vol.4, p. 363, 24-32) runs as follows:

It seems that if we wish to put a denoting meaning in an entity-position, and say something about the meaning itself, we can only do so by means of a denoting concept; for if, instead of a denoting concept, we put the meaning in question, then, since the position is an entity-position, we shall be talking unintentionally about the denotation of the meaning instead of about the meaning. Thus a denoting meaning can only be spoken of by means of denoting concepts which denote the meaning in question. This is what inverted commas do: they give a denoting concept which denotes the meaning of what is between the inverted commas.

In this passage the reason is to be found why Russell left his former innocent view. He did so because he realized that in POM §56 he had overlooked a quite essential difference between denoting concepts and other concepts. It may be explained in comparing the following two pairs of propositions

- (1a) Socrates is human.
- (1b) Humanity belongs to Socrates.

⁹⁹ Russell (1903b), pp.321-322 seems to justify this assumption.

- (2a) The centre of mass of the solar system is a point, not a denoting complex.
- (2b) “The centre of mass of the solar system” is a denoting complex, not a point.

In the above-quoted text the notion of *position* occurs, more in particular the notion of *entity-position*. In POM it is virtually present, but actually absent. In OF and other manuscripts it plays a prominent role. There Russell elaborates the so-called ‘substitutional theory’ in the hope of solving the paradox by means of it.¹⁰⁰ The main idea behind it is, that the variable must be unrestricted in *scope* and restricted in *position*. The variable is explained by means of denoting. It is supposed to be a specific ambiguously denoting concept, namely ‘any entity’. The unrestricted range of the variable is due to the unrestricted extension of the notion of entity. It excludes absolutely nothing, for it is impossible to mention something that is not an entity.¹⁰¹

The positional restriction of the unrestricted variable is to be explained as follows. In (1a) what is symbolized by the word “human” can be replaced by any other predicate without impairing the significance of the proposition. If we substitute ‘Greek’ for ‘human’, we get another proposition, which is equally true. If we replace ‘human’ by ‘English’, we get a false proposition, but still a genuine one. For a proposition is something that is true or false. But if ‘human’ is replaced by another kind of concept, say a relation such as ‘greater than’, the result is not a genuine proposition at all.

The fact that what is symbolized by “human” can only be replaced by a predicate, not by something else, is not due to *what* it is. It is not due to its being itself a predicate, but to its *position*. In (1a) it occupies a predicate-position, i.e. a special kind of *meaning position*. In (1b) the very same predicate occurs in an essentially different kind of position, namely an *entity-position*. There it may, according to Russell, be replaced by anything whatever. The result will always be a genuine, true or false, proposition. For the notion of the unrestricted variable is based on the principle of the *unrestricted possible aboutness* of the proposition. Even a sentence like “Difference belongs to Socrates” is supposed to express a genuine, but false proposition.

The situation may be illustrated by the following fictional account. There are different countries, each having its own language. The possibility that different countries have the same language is not excluded. All people whose native language differs from English, speak one and only one foreign

100 See Landini (1998).

101 See 4.3 above.

language, namely English. And English is the only possible foreign language. Furthermore, people are allowed to visit a foreign country, provided they know the language of that country. In this world native speakers of English would be like Russellian things. Their countries would correspond to entity-positions. The freedom of movement allowed to local inhabitants would be restricted to the Anglo-Saxon world. But all people of the whole world could meet there.

Now, a predicate is like, say, a Hungarian. A Hungarian who happens to be at home in a meaning-position, can only be replaced by other Hungarians. There, Hungarians cannot meet anyone else but fellow-Hungarians. For strangers are not allowed to enter the country. But if a Hungarian happens to be at home, that is not due to his being Hungarian. For like all non-native speakers of English, a Hungarian may travel to the whole Anglo-Saxon world.

Most remarkable in this connection is that the most free and cosmopolitan countries (entity-positions) are originally inhabited by the less free and cosmopolitan people (things). And the freest people (concepts) originally inhabit the less free countries (meaning-positions).

In (1b) the ending “ity” attached to “human” only indicates a change in position, but an essential one. It is more essential than the change Socrates has undergone. He is replaced from the position of a subject in a singular subject-predicate proposition to the position of term of a dyadic relation in a relational proposition. Nevertheless, he has only moved from one entity position towards another one. In fact, being a thing, he is not able to move in any other way. But what is symbolized by “human” in (1a) is transposed from a predicate-position, i.e. a special kind of meaning-position, to an entity-position in (1b).

But – and that is the essential point the innocent Russell must initially have overlooked and later have realized – the change indicated by the inverted commas in (2b) cannot be explained in the same way. For in (2a) the denoting concept expressed by the phrase “the centre of mass of the solar system” already occupied an entity position in spite of the fact that (2a) is not about that denoting concept. In other words: *denoting takes place in an entity-position*. That is why the unrestricted variable, which in fact is a particular case of denoting, can only have an unrestricted range in an entity-position. Denoting concepts are less ordinary than Russell supposed them to be in *Principles*: they differ from all other kinds of concepts by their capacity to occur in an entity position *instead of* something the proposition is about. As soon as an ordinary concept such as ‘human’ is moved to an entity-position, the proposition will be about that concept. But a denoting concept normally occurs in an entity position anyhow, without itself being something the proposition is about.

Therefore, the inverted commas in (2b) cannot be construed as indicating that the denoting concept expressed by “the centre of mass of the solar system” has been moved into an entity-position. The inverted commas are to be explained otherwise: as providing a change from its normal entity-position in which it actually denotes, into an *extraordinary* position provided by the greater denoting concept by which it is denoted and *in which it occurs as non-denoting thanks to that particular change of position*.

12 The quasi-Fregean view as mitigated mediatism

12.1 Mitigated mediatism in view of the GEA

The view sketched in the previous section may be called *mitigated mediatism*. It is mediatism because according to it, the only way a denoting concept can occur as subject of a proposition is by means of another denoting concept, which denotes it. But it is mitigated because it presupposes the immediatism of the innocent view. *In* that mediating denoting concept the denoting concept we want to speak about, is *immediately* present. For in that position, it is supposed to occur as *neither denoting nor denoted*. It is quite important to distinguish these two requirements, but it is even more important to distinguish in view of each the assumption that it is *sound* from the assumption that it can be *fulfilled*. The latter constitutes the innocence, i.e. the naivety and obvious weakness of the quasi-Fregean view. In the present and following section I shall only discuss its strength.

As far as the soundness of the above-mentioned assumptions is concerned, Russell never changed his mind. For the innocent Russell of POM §56, the quasi-Fregean Russell as well as the Russell who wrote the GEA after having rejected the quasi-Fregean solution are all of the same opinion. It may be stated as follows: If there are denoting concepts at all, it must be possible for them to occur as subject of a proposition in such a way that either in the subject position of that proposition itself or somewhere else, they occur as non-denoting and non-denoted. In other words: if for some reason or other mediatism is to be considered, then it must be *mitigated* in order to be sound at all. Russell never actually adopted something like unmitigated mediatism.

Nevertheless, it is actually discussed in the GEA, but only as a seeming way out, which, in order to prove the difficulty’s inevitability, is dismissed as unsound.¹⁰² Unmitigated mediatism simply consists in the assumption that it is *sufficient* to denote the denoting concept we want to speak about. There is

102 See below 20.2, 20.3 and 20.4.

no need to require anything more. The denoting concept we want to speak about need not itself participate in its being made the subject of discourse, just as someone who is gossiped about in the newspaper need not perforce have collaborated in his being made the topic of discourse. Now, if we want to speak about a certain denoting concept, it is always possible to find some denoting phrase, which actually does express that concept. If we, for some reason or other, dislike the use of quotation marks, we may denote the phrase as the one which is to be found on some definite line of some definite page of a definite print of some definite book. Having thus succeeded in mentioning the phrase, we may successfully mention the denoting concept as the one expressed by that phrase.

The Russell of the GEA does not deny the viability of this procedure, but he wants to deny that it is sufficient. That is why, in its third paragraph (OD, par 20), after having described the nature of the problem, he provides a possible alternative description in saying “also that the meaning cannot be got at except by means of denoting phrases”. What Russell must have had in mind in this connection is: the problem is, *mentioning* a phrase that does express the meaning we want to speak about, is the *only* possible way to do so. This view presupposes that unmitigated mediatism is unsound. Otherwise, there would not be any serious, let alone any inevitable difficulty at all. In the said third paragraph of the GEA, Russell gives a very fundamental reason why unmitigated mediatism cannot be accepted. It will be discussed in section 16. Here I only want to observe that in the GEA the issue is explained, whereas in OF it is assumed as a matter of course. Anything corresponding to the GEA’s third paragraph is not to be found in OF.¹⁰³

Frege must have been of essentially the same opinion as Russell: When we want to speak about the sense of a certain expression, we can do so by quoting or otherwise mentioning that expression and describing the sense as the sense of that expression. But there is also another procedure, which in the context of Frege’s argument proves to be much more important: not mentioning the expression, but using it in indirect speech. The latter alternative is not only more important to Frege, but to Russell as well. That is why not so much the Frege of the quotation marks is relevant to him, but the Frege of indirect sense.

12.2 Frege’s mitigated mediatism as more problematic

Nevertheless, the notion of indirect sense is much less elaborated than the view of the quasi-Fregean Russell. For in the latter the said idea of

¹⁰³ See 16.1.

participation, i.e., the rejection of unmitigated mediatism, is quite clear. The denoting concept we want to speak about occurs twice: as denoted by a larger denoting concept and as non-denoting and not denoted *in* the said larger denoting concept. However, if we ask Frege whether and if so, in which way the direct sense occurs in – or is part of the indirect sense referring to it, he probably would not know what to answer. Evidently, his use of the phrase “*the* indirect sense” suggests that among all the senses referring to some definite sense, say the sense of the expression “the Morningstar”, one is more intimately connected with that one sense than with all the others. It not only points to it, but in some way is also *derived from it*.

Russell’s quasi-Fregean view is not only more elaborate than the view of Frege himself, it is also more promising. For Russell’s meaning is essentially a special kind of concept. And all concepts, according to him, are distinguished from non-concepts, i.e. from things, in virtue of their being susceptible of two different kinds of occurrence: as concept or meaning and as entity. In case of a denoting concept, this amounts to the same as: occurring as denoting versus occurring as non-denoting. This distinction appeared to be essential to the way the denoting concept we want to speak about is supposed to be involved in its own being made the subject of a proposition. For it is to be involved in it as non-denoting. As such it occurs in the larger denoting concept, which actually denotes it. In so far it is clear how this embedding denoting concept is supposed to be derived from the denoting concept it is supposed to denote. It contains it as non-denoting or as entity. In (2b) the phrase *containing* the inverted commas denotes the denoting concept the proposition is about and the phrase contained in the converted commas is to be construed as *proper name* of the very same denoting concept that occurs as non-denoting.

Nothing resembling such a twofold occurrence is to be found in Frege’s logic. Nevertheless, without it the question how the indirect sense is supposed to be derived from the sense which is its reference, can hardly be answered. For if any sense always occurs in the same way, then the direct sense cannot participate in the constitution of the indirect sense referring to it. Suppose we want to speak about the sense of the phrase “the Morningstar” in another way than we have done, i.e., without mentioning the *phrase*. And suppose as well that a sense cannot occur in different ways. Then this is equally true of the sense we want to speak about. It will never stop referring to the Morningstar. And as such it can never help us in speaking about that sense itself. It can only help us in speaking about what is unambiguously determined by the Morningstar, such as its mass, its rotation or its average distance from the sun.

13 Russellian subtlety: the complex as different from its meaning

13.1 The view's virtues as important to the GEA

In the present section I shall continue postponing the discussion of the quasi-Fregean view's weakness. I do so, because in my opinion it is impossible to understand the GEA unless a serious attempt is made to understand its other side, i.e. Russell's road to the discovery of its weakness and the virtues of the view whose weakness he discovered. For in OF §35 he made that discovery not as an outsider, but as a serious adherent of the quasi-Fregean view, an adherent who wanted to clarify it.

The advantage of such a historical and benevolent approach is that it enables us to recognize the quasi-Fregean Russell *in* the GEA. For among the different possible views discussed in it, one and only one has actually once been embraced by Russell himself, namely the quasi-Fregean view. All alternative options are no more than implausible evasions. They are seriously considered, but not seriously adopted. In my opinion this has been overlooked both by those who tried to ridicule the GEA and by those who made an attempt to construe it as a valid argument.

Although the GEA is an argument, it is not purely argumentative; it is a discovery put in the form of an argument by the same person who actually made the discovery. Ignoring the importance of this fact is of the same nature as ignoring that the word "house" is English but nevertheless not purely English. In fact it is but the English form of a word that also occurs, for example, in German or in Dutch, but in different forms, namely as "Haus" or "huis". It might be objected that these words are different and all of them derived from an original that is different from all of them, say the Gothic "hus" or the Sanskrit "kosha". However, the origin and what is derived from it are both different forms of the same, i.e., of something, which is not outside, but *in* those forms. This also applies to the GEA and the origin from which it is derived. They do not differ from each other as A and B, nor as A and AB, nor as AC and BC, but rather as AB and BA, i.e., as opposed forms of the same.

The mediatism Russell adopted from Frege within the framework of his own theory may not only be called mitigated, but *subtle* as well. For it is based on a subtle distinction between the denoting concept we want to speak about and the denoting concept *as it occurs in* the larger denoting concept by means of which we want to speak about it. The former is called *meaning*, the latter *complex*. Therefore, the quasi-Fregean view has two unsuspected and often

neglected features, which may both be expressed by the words: *not sufficient*. If we want to speak about the meaning of an unambiguously denoting phrase, we may do so by mentioning that phrase. But that is *not sufficient*. It must be possible as well to do so by means of the meaning we want to speak about. It must occur in the denoting concept by means of which we speak about it. This then, is what typifies the quasi-Fregean view as *mitigated* mediatism (see previous section). The reason behind it will be discussed in section 16.

The second feature of the quasi-Fregean view is constituted by the mentioned *subtle* distinction between the “complex”, i.e., the concept as occurring in the larger one and the concept as denoted by the larger one, i.e., as meaning. It is *not sufficient* to denote by means of a denoting concept exactly the same concept. For we want to speak about it *as meaning* or denoting. But we can only speak about it by means of it *as non-denoting*. In other words, we want to speak about a denoting concept as denoting by means of it as not denoting. That is why the denoting concept we want to speak about is to be distinguished from that very same concept as it occurs in the larger denoting concept by means of which we speak about it. In other words, the addition symbolized by the inverted commas is to be construed as: the meaning of.... For we want to speak about the meaning by means of something which *elsewhere*, namely in its normal denoting occurrence, *has* meaning.

The Russell who in OF §35 (p.381) starts to explain the use of inverted commas, 13 lines before the difficulty is discovered, assumes as a matter of course that precisely this subtle distinction is to be made.

“The use of inverted commas may be explained as follows. When a concept has meaning and denotation....”

13.2 Subtlety versus two modes of indifference

The subtlety of Russell’s mitigated mediatism may be rejected in two different ways. The first version may be called *indifferent mitigated mediatism*. It neither occurs in OF nor in the GEA. Russell never considered, let alone adopted it. Nevertheless, it is relevant in this connection because he rejected it as a matter of course. The only reason why I pay attention to it, is that it may serve as a foil, highlighting what the subtle distinction between complex and meaning amounts to.

Indifferent mitigated mediatism differs from the quasi-Fregean view in being less ambitious. According to it, there is one and only one reason why

denoting is needed in order to make a denoting concept the subject of a proposition. It is supposed to be necessary because the denoting concept we want to speak about, has to be put into *another position*. There it has to occur as non-denoting. A larger denoting concept has to provide the new position. And that is the only task it has to perform. Consequently, the inverted commas are to be construed as a tautological addition. After all, we want to speak about the very same denoting concept we have put into its new position. Therefore, the addition symbolized by the inverted commas may be construed as: *the concept which is the same as....*

When we want to speak about the predicate indicated by “human” in the proposition expressed by “Socrates is human”, it is sufficient to put it into an entity-position. In case of a denoting concept the situation is, according to this view, essentially the same, save that another denoting concept is needed in order to provide a new position. Just as it is sufficient to speak about humanity, so it is sufficient to speak about a denoting concept as it occurs in its new position, viz. as non-denoting.

The subtlety of the quasi-Fregean view consists in the assumption that it is not sufficient to speak about the concept as non-denoting. The larger denoting concept is supposed to have a twofold task: it has to provide a new position and it has to denote what occupies that position not as it actually occurs in it, not as entity, but as meaning or denoting. In other words, it has to make possible a non-denoting occurrence of a denoting concept and it has to compensate and transcend that very occurrence by denoting it as concept or meaning. Consequently, the inverted commas have to symbolize a non-tautological addition, namely: *the meaning of....*

This view may also be applied to other kinds of concepts, for example to the predicate “human”. Denoting widens the scope of what a proposition may be about. It is not sufficient to speak about humanity. Thanks to denoting concepts we are able to speak about the meaning of humanity, i.e., about the predicate as predicate.

The obvious weakness of the quasi-Fregean view is in fact not due to its subtlety. Rather its failure consists in the assumption that a denoting concept will automatically stop denoting as soon as it is put into a larger denoting concept. Indifferent mitigated mediatism is based on the same failure. In OF §35 Russell, as adherent of subtle mitigated mediatism, discovered this failure. In the next two sections I shall discuss the nature of this discovery.

In any event, both in OF §36 and in the corresponding part of the GEA (OD paragraph 22), another kind of indifferent view is introduced. Russell takes it into account on occasion of the said discovery, but he never adopted

it. In the next chapter (see especially 17.3, 18 and 20.1), I shall extensively discuss it. Here I only want to indicate in which way it is related to the above-sketched indifferent mitigated mediatism.

As far as it consists in rejecting the subtle distinction between meaning and complex, the view occurring in OF §36 and in the GEA is similar. On that account it may be called “indifferent” as well. But it is dissimilar in being based on a somewhat rash assessment of the failure discovered in OF §35. It assumes, that the concept’s refusal to stop denoting, is due to its being imbedded into a larger denoting concept. In other words, the freshly discovered failure is wrongly supposed to be based on the subtlety of the quasi-Fregean view. As far as the meaning is concerned, this results in *indifferent immediatism*. The meaning is supposed to be the same as the complex. It can be mentioned immediately, whereas the denotation is mentioned by means of the complex, i.e., as the denotation of the complex. The inverted commas do not, according to this view, symbolize a tautological addition, but a substraction of “the denotation of.....” from what is meant by the phrase in its normal use.

This view is not just less ambitious than the quasi-Fregean one; it is more experienced and has another ambition, namely explaining and avoiding its failure.

13.3 Denoting as widening the scope of being about

Indifferent mitigated mediatism, however, is just less ambitious than the quasi-Fregean view. It is based on a rather low opinion of denoting. It treats description as but a substitute for naming or enumerating. An indifferent adherent of mitigated mediatism must be prepared to admit that there is something special and extraordinary about denoting concepts. For the only way to name them is, according to the view in question, to put them into a larger denoting concept. That is why the inverted commas are to be explained as: the complex which is the same as... . But even in this case denoting makes naming possible. It is its servant. Mentioning by name is the real thing. It is always sufficient. We make use of description when we want to avoid mentioning by name or when we do not know the name or when we are too lazy to enumerate all the prime numbers smaller than 1000. Speaking about them by means of the denoting concept ‘all prime numbers smaller than 1000’ saves a lot of time and energy.

The spirit of Russell’s theory of denoting concepts is in direct opposition to this view. I have deliberately chosen the example of the prime numbers smaller than 1000. For although enumerating all prime numbers smaller than

1000 is possible, enumerating all prime numbers is impossible. Their number is infinite. Nevertheless by means of the denoting concept 'all prime numbers' we are able to understand propositions about them all. Thanks to the fact that there are denoting concepts, we are able to grasp propositions about infinitely many entities. Without them mathematics would be impossible. In POM §141, p. 145, Russell says:

Indeed it may be said that the logical purpose which is served by the theory of denoting is, to enable propositions of finite complexity to deal with infinite classes of terms: this object is affected by *all*, *any* and *every*, and if it were not effected, every general proposition about an infinite class would have to be infinitely complex. Now, for my part, I see no possible ways of deciding whether propositions of infinite complexity are possible or not; but this at least is clear, that all the propositions known to us (and it would seem, all propositions that we *can* know) are of finite complexity.

In OD's second paragraph, not written for mathematicians but for readers of *Mind*, something similar is put forward: denoting is important because it widens the scope of our knowledge. Without denoting it would be confined to what we are acquainted with:

The subject of denoting is of very great importance, not only in logic and mathematics, but also in theory of knowledge. For example, we know that the centre of mass of the solar system at a definite instant is some definite point, and we can affirm a number of propositions about it; but we have no immediate *acquaintance* with this point, which is only known to us by description. The distinction between *acquaintance* and *knowledge about* is the distinction between the things we have presentations of, and the things we only reach by means of denoting phrases. It often happens that we know that a certain phrase denotes unambiguously, although we have no acquaintance with what it denotes; this occurs in the above case of the centre of mass. In perception we have acquaintance with the objects of perception, and in thought we have acquaintance with objects of a more abstract logical character; but we do not necessarily have acquaintance with the objects denoted by phrases composed of words with whose meanings we are acquainted. To take a very important instance: there seems no reason to believe that we are ever acquainted with other people's minds, seeing that these are not directly perceived; hence what we know about them is obtained through denoting. All thinking has to start from acquaintance;

but it succeeds in thinking *about* many things with which we have no acquaintance.¹⁰⁴

14 The discovery

14.1 Principle of discovery and discovered innocence

The discovery to be discussed in the present section seems to be rather trivial. In the next section I shall try to explain why it nevertheless is important. Here I only want to pay attention to the main opposition involved in it, the opposition between the principle of discovery and the discovered innocence. In order to do so, I shall start with the following series of sentences:

- (1a) Socrates is human
- (1b) Humanity belongs to Socrates
- (1c) The meaning of humanity occurs in (1a)

- (3a) The first line of Gray's Elegy states a proposition
- (3b) "The first line of Gray's Elegy" does not state a proposition
- (3b') The meaning of the first line of Gray's Elegy does not state a proposition
- (3b'') The meaning of "the first line of Gray's Elegy" does not state a proposition

Sentences (1a) and (1b) do not have anything to do with denoting. But (1c) does in a somewhat strange way. It is the result of the principle discussed in the previous section: making use of denoting in order to speak about a concept as concept. Sentences (3a) and (3b) are borrowed from the GEA, par. B. In them denoting is prominently present. Sentence (3b') is nothing but the result of applying the proposed explanation of inverted commas to (3b). This evidently leads to a failure. In (3b'') the inverted commas are re-introduced in a slightly different way in order to correct the failure.

In order to discuss the principle of discovery, I shall start with proposition (3a). It is unproblematic, for it just provides an example of a denoting phrase

104 In the present study no attention is paid to the epistemological aspect of denoting as applied in Russell's later work. I leave it aside because in my opinion it is hardly of any importance to understanding the GEA. That is why I strongly disagree with Kremer (1994) who fails to take any notice of OF.

occurring in the way it normally does. It expresses a denoting concept which actually denotes what the proposition is about, namely the first line of Gray's Elogy. The phrase denotes what it denotes in virtue of the actually denoting concept or meaning expressed by it. According to the theory of denoting concepts, it is primarily the meaning or the concept as meaning which denotes the denotation, not the phrase. The phrase may be called a denoting phrase because it happens to be one of the phrases which express something denoting, namely the concept as meaning.

Is there according to the theory of denoting concepts any need to move from (3a) to (3b) and its possible explanations? In 9.2 I have argued that *our* need to speak about meanings is in fact much more irrelevant to Russell's theory than he suggests. What is at stake is not our need to change the subject of our discourse, but the need of any entity to be capable of occurring as subject of a proposition. That need amounts to the same as the need to prove that it actually deserves to be called an entity. As such it is general and does not have anything in particular to do with denoting.

But there is also another reason why the transition from normal to exceptional use is to be made, namely that an analysis of the proposition or a theory about propositions itself consists of propositions. There is no vantage point outside propositions. I do not say this in order to criticize Russell, but in order to highlight a principle, which is essential to the very spirit of his philosophy; so much so that he often fails to mention it, even in POM, Ch.V. Russell was dissatisfied with traditional logic because it presupposes a lot of things, i.e., a lot of propositions, that do not meet what according to traditional logic propositions ought to be (see below 22.2).

As applied to (3a) this point may be explained as follows. I have started in putting forward a lot of things about an ordinary example like (3a), which according to the theory of denoting concepts must be true. 'Things' which are true are propositions. One of those propositions is, that the meaning in question denotes the denotation. This relational proposition however is not just an ordinary one. For it is not only about the denotation, but also about the very same meaning that occurs in (3a), about which (3a) itself is silent. In other words: ordinary occurrences of denoting concepts *show* extraordinary things according to the theory in question. And appealing to a Wittgensteinian absolute vantage point of silence beyond the sayable would be at variance with the spirit of Russell's philosophy. Therefore, according to him, it must be possible to say in the theory what according to that theory ordinary propositions *show*. If the theory of denoting concepts is not able to meet this requirement, that in itself is sufficient to prove that the theory is wrong.

It is quite evident that (3b) not only differs from (3a) on account of the inverted commas, but equally on account of the negation added to the predicate. Both (3a) and (3b) are supposed to be true. But the predicates occurring in them are incompatible. Therefore (3b) must be about something different from what (3a) is about. The latter is about the denotation of the phrase “the first line of Gray’s *Elegy*”, the former about the meaning expressed by it. At least, we may assume that it is about that meaning as long as the inverted commas are taken for granted.

As I have argued in 9.2, the innocent Russell of POM §56 actually supposed the inverted commas to be unproblematic. But he had something more in mind, which is not mentioned in the GEA, namely that they are unproblematic because a denoting concept can be made the subject of a proposition in exactly the same way, as for example, a predicate. If that hypothesis is right, then the innocent Russell must have supposed that (3b) differs from (3a) in the same way as (1b) from (1a). Then the inverted commas in (3b) are not just left unexplained, but explained in a simple and naïve way: as similar to the ending “ity” in “humanity”. The innocence is to be found in the supposed *similarity*, not in what it is supposed to be similar to. For in 9.2 Russell’s view on how what is meant by “human” in (1a) occurs in (1b), appeared to be far from innocent! The difference is supposed to me merely external, not intrinsic.

As explained in section 11, once, either in OF or earlier, Russell became aware of his own inattention: the difference between what is meant by “human” in (1a) and what is meant by “humanity” in (1b) is, according to him, due to a change in *position*. Such a change in position is not accounted for in the transition from (3a) to (3b) unless the inverted commas are construed as representing an addition, which actually *gives* a new kind of position to the denoting concept occurring in (3a). This shift in position is supposed to be *similar* to the shift from a predicate-position to a subject-position. Here we are confronted with essentially the same innocence, but now within the framework of the quasi-Fregean view.

In (3b′) the subtle version of this view is actually applied to (3b). The inverted commas are explained as translatable into: the meaning of And the denoting concept expressed by “the first line of Gray’s *Elegy*” is expected to occur as non-denoting, i.e., otherwise than in (3a). But unfortunately, this expectation is not fulfilled. Actually it occurs in exactly the same way. Consequently (3b′) is not true, at least not in the way we hoped it to be true. The predicate is the same as in (3b), but unintentionally the subject has changed.

14.2 Discovery and loss of innocence in OF §35

This failure might be corrected by adding inverted commas where first we supposed them to be superfluous. This is effectuated in (3b'') The inverted commas occurring in it may be construed in two ways: either as indicating the desired change of occurrence as a fact, or in the same way as explained by the quasi-Fregean view in (3b'). If we choose the former alternative, then the correcting inverted commas indicate the change of occurrence we expected to take place automatically on account of the change in position. Conceived in this way, (3b'') is about the same subject as (3b). If the latter alternative is chosen, we get a harmful infinite regress. For then the inverted commas in (3b'') are to be explained as an addition, which gives rise to the same problem as (3b'). Thus we need new inverted commas for correcting the result. These, in turn, are to be explained in the same way, etc.

This is actually the point of view expressed in OF §35, p.382, where Russell is discovering the problem. The quasi-Fregean explanation appears to be circular. It purports to avoid the innocent explanation of the inverted commas, but it is only successful in getting the desired meaning if it makes use of them.

The first innocent part of this text roughly corresponds to the one quoted and discussed in section 11. The enquiry starts as a restatement of the "important principle" of the quasi-Fregean view:

The use of inverted commas may be explained as follows. When a concept has meaning and denotation, if we wish to say anything about the meaning, we must put it in an *entity*-position; but if we put it itself in an entity-position, we shall be really speaking about the denotation, not the meaning, for that is always the case when a denoting complex is put in an entity-position. Thus in order to speak about the meaning, we must substitute for the meaning something which *denotes* the meaning. Hence the meaning of denoting complexes can only be approached by means of complexes which denote those meanings. This is what complexes in inverted commas are.

But in the subsequent part of that passage Russell takes a little, but very consequential step forward by illustrating the "important principle" by means of an example. In fact this example is significantly different from the examples discussed in the GEA. It is an ambiguously denoting concept, namely "any man". Here I shall leave this difference aside. It will be extensively discussed below (21.3). At any rate, in this last part of §35 the above-mentioned circularity is discovered:

If we say “‘any man’ is a denoting complex’, ‘any man’ stands for ‘the meaning of the complex “any man”’, which is a denoting complex. But this is circular; for we use “any man” in explaining “any man”. And the circle is unavoidable. For if we say “the meaning of any man”, that will stand for the meaning of the denotation of any man which is not what we want.

15 Persuasiveness and concealed weakness

15.1 Apparent triviality of Russell’s discovery

This short piece of text might be called the crucial passage in OF. It contains the very discovery of the curious problem on whose occasion two pages later the ToD is conceived. Nevertheless, in spite of its incontestable historical importance, it seems to offer nothing more than the discovery of something quite trivial, namely that a denoting phrase, if it is embedded in another denoting phrase, remains just as much denoting as it was on its own account. For example, we may speak about the actual number of citizens of Paris. In that case we make use of the proper name “Paris”. That proper name may be replaced by an unambiguously denoting phrase, such as “the capital of France”. It denotes the bearer of the proper name “Paris”. Putting the phrase into a larger denoting phrase, or putting the denoting concept expressed by it into a larger denoting concept, of course does not make any difference. Speaking or being about the number of citizens of Paris amounts to the same as speaking or being about the number of citizens of the capital of France. Why was Russell surprised about this? Had he been enchanted by a curious expectation? If so, why should his disenchantment be of any importance? Why suppose it to be the discovery of a “curious problem”? If you get rid of a curious belief, the only curious thing you discover is the belief itself. You become aware of something strange in yourself by becoming aware of something normal outside yourself.

If the view I have proposed in the preceding section is right, then in that crucial passage of OF Russell simply discovered the innocence in his own quasi-Fregean view. *Our* problem is to understand what is surprising about this innocence. If it is not an obvious failure, how could it be concealed? In other words: if the quasi-Fregean view is wrong, where is its power of persuasion to be found?

15.2 Its importance explained by distinguishing roles from positions

In my opinion it is to be found in the quite fundamental notion of *occurrence*. Russell fails to distinguish sufficiently occurrence as *role* from occurrence as *position*.¹⁰⁵

If you like clarity, the distinction has to be made in any case. For even if you are inclined to both externalism and clarity – as-the-far-from-innocent Russell obviously was – then you cannot ignore this distinction. Something like difference in position can, after all, not be denied. Therefore the question is whether that is sufficient. If you think it is, you suppose difference in role to be reducible to difference in position. This view cannot be clearly expressed unless use is made of the notion of occurrence as role. The axiom that difference in occurrence is nothing more than difference in position does not make any sense unless you have an idea of what it would mean for it to be more than just this difference. A clear externalist has to pay attention to what is external to his own view.

According to me, Russell's theory of denoting concepts cannot be explained unless this distinction is made. For its quintessence simply is that denoting concepts differ from other kinds of concepts, because as denoting they play a *meaning-role in an entity-position*. They occupy the position of something the proposition is about, without being themselves something the proposition is about. They take the place of something else without playing its role. What happens behind the linguistic level according to this theory, when in the sentence "Scott was born in Edinburgh" the proper name "Scott" is replaced by the denoting phrase "the author of *Waverley*"? At the level of the proposition the change is supposed to be as follows. The entity-position formerly occupied by Scott himself is now occupied by the denoting concept expressed by "the author of *Waverley*". However, the proposition is not about that denoting concept. Although it occurs in the same position as Scott, named by his proper name, it does not play the same role. The proposition is still about Scott, but now in virtue of the denoting concept's pointing to him. By this replacement, Scott himself is pushed backwards, farther away from language. The arrow pointing from the meaning to the denotation is perpendicular to the line of the sentence. The predicate expressed by "born in Edinburgh" is not any longer attributed sideward, but obliquely backwards, towards what the denoting concept denotes.

As far as I can see, this account of the theory of denoting concepts by means of the distinction between position and role just leaves the *content* of

105 Wahl (1993), p.81 has touched this point without elaborating it any further.

the theory for what it is. Nevertheless, the *form* of the theory has changed. By means of the non-exclusive distinction between position and role another distinction can be introduced: namely the exclusive distinction between accepting or rejecting externalism. The latter distinction puts the theory in a new form: the form of *excluding externalism*. If the theory of denoting concepts is to be consistently upheld, it is to be freed from externalism. And if externalism is wholeheartedly accepted, this theory is to be rejected. The two are incompatible.

Nevertheless, from a psychological or historical perspective, the two may be reconciled with each other, but at the cost of confusion. If my analysis is right, that is their only possible reconciliation. Of course, this third way is not an alternative you can deliberately adopt. You only can get involved in it without being aware of the confusion. Actually, that is the way Russell got involved in it. That is where his original innocence is to be located. He lost what he lost of it by becoming aware of it. And the two views he successively discovered to be confused, namely the innocent one and its quasi-Fregean successor, both seemed to be convincing thanks to their undiscovered confusion. Their power of persuasion and their weakness were in fact closely knit.

Russell's original, innocent view, the one put forward in POM §56, seemed to be convincing as long as role and position were not distinguished. Not making use of the distinction, it may be rendered as follows: "All concepts *must* be susceptible of not only occurring as concept, but also as entity. Therefore, of course, denoting concepts are capable of occurring that way. If they actually do so, we have to indicate the fact by means of italics or inverted commas". This view is convincing as long as you primarily think of occurrence as *role*. Russell just forgot that according to his own externalism as applied to predicates, a change of role is nothing more than a change of position. The transition from "human" to "humanity" is supposed to be nothing more than a change from a meaning-position to an entity-position.

The first discovery is made in the context of the substitutional theory, i.e., a theory in which the notion of position is of central importance. In this way Russell became aware of what he initially had overlooked. Now, although primarily focused on occurrence as position, occurrence as role is not completely forgotten. Therefore, in this case, the situation is somewhat more complicated. A change in position is supposed to be *necessary and sufficient* to achieve the desired change of *role*. Normally a denoting concept plays a meaning-role. Therefore, in order to change its role into an entity-role, "we have to put it into an entity-position". But that is not sufficient. For "if we put it itself in an entity-position [i.e., without any addition], we shall be really

speaking about the denotation, not the meaning, for that is always the case when a denoting complex is put into an entity-position". Therefore, we have to put it into a *new* entity position, a position within the larger denoting concept which has to denote it. Put into that *extraordinary* entity-position, it will play an entity-role, just as when what is meant by "human", put into an extraordinary position, automatically comes to play an entity-role.

15.3 Confused force of the quasi-Fregean view

The force of persuasion of the quasi-Fregean view is based on the supposed similarity between denoting concepts and other concepts as conceived from a half-heartedly accepted externalist perspective. For the quintessence of externalism is the axiom that *sameness and difference* must, on pain of contradiction, be outside each other. Something may be different from something else, but not different from itself. *Into* one and the same thing difference cannot intrude. Identity is pure and absolute. If one and the same entity seems to be *in* different forms and on that account it seems that as it is in one form, it differs from itself as it is in another form, then this must be an illusion. In reality there may be different forms, provided their difference remains outside what is supposed to *have* these forms. Internal difference as two-sidedness is supposed to be contradictory.

As applied to the concept symbolized by the words "human" and "humanity" in (1a) and (1b), this view means that although that concept may be in different positions, that difference of position cannot be in it. Indeed, human and humanity seem to be different forms of one and the same. But in reality it cannot differ from itself. In reality there is only difference between two different positions. The concept occurring in both is different from these positions and indifferent to both.

If this view is whole-heartedly accepted, then what seems to be the most essential difference in role acknowledged by Russell, the difference between occurring as term of a proposition, i.e., as something the proposition is about versus occurring otherwise, i.e., as meaning or concept, must be reduced to a difference in *position*. Then so-called denoting concepts are to be rejected from the very outset. For the role they are supposed to play is in flat contradiction with their position. In other words, they are to be banished from logic not on account of some curious, unsuspected property they happen to reveal after having been accepted, but on account of what they basically and essentially are supposed to be.

If externalism is wholeheartedly rejected – and that is the view I advocate

– then occurrence as entity, i.e., as acting as something the proposition is about, cannot be reduced to occupying a certain kind of position. The twofold occurrence of what is meant by ‘human’ may be explained otherwise, i.e., as being more than just a replacement. There might be an internal two-sidedness involved. As seen from this perspective, denoting concepts are acceptable. Their being capable of changing their role without any change in position need not perforce be excluded. It may be construed as being due to an internal two-sidedness as well. The difference symbolized by the addition of the inverted commas is then not to be construed according to the scheme A versus AB, or AB versus AC, but rather according to the model AB versus BA. Such a view is on the other side of the innocent Russell of POM §56.

If externalism is half-heartedly accepted, then we start with the view of the innocent Russell. We treat Socrates’s being human in an externalist fashion. In spite of that, we welcome denoting concepts on account of their capacity to widen the range of items a proposition may be about. We welcome them without being aware of their being incompatible with externalism. Our starting point is the view that, of course, there is no problem at all. Then we realize that we have forgotten something: the change of position required by externalism. The Fregean model, making use of denoting in order to speak about what denotes, seems to solve the problem. And finally, in the crucial passage in OF, we discover the inadequacy of the Fregean assistance. And that is quite clearly not the discovery of something trivial. For we discover that, if you whole-heartedly accept externalism, denoting concepts are to be rejected.¹⁰⁶

15.4 The Frege of indirect sense as compared with the un-Meinongian one

As seen from this perspective, there is a remarkable correspondence between the role played by Frege in this connection and the role he appeared to play in the previous chapter. In both cases Frege’s more sweeping theory of sense and reference helped Russell to lose his innocence. In both cases the theory of denoting concepts was applied where initially it had not been. What at first was supposed to be a proper name, i.e., an expression beyond the scope of

106 Or – and that is the continental counterpart of the discovery (see 0.3 footnote 19) – if denoting, i.e., something like intentionality, is to be accepted, it must be outside the realm of externalist logic. And if logic is supposed to be externalist anyhow, intentionality only seems to be possible as being more fundamental than logic.

the theory of denoting concepts, was thanks to Frege construed as a denoting phrase. According to Russell's innocent quasi-Meinongianism, "Zeus" is the proper name of a real but non-existent entity. According to the Russell inspired by the un-Meinongian Frege, "Zeus" is to be construed as a denoting phrase in disguise. It does express a meaning, but fails to have a denotation. Only, *after* the conception of the ToD, did Russell discover the inadequacy of the Fregean assistance, as the adopted view leads to an excessive amount of truth-value gaps. The ToD is able to avoid them without accepting Zeus and his congeries as entities.

Russell's innocent view on the way denoting concepts can occur as subject of a proposition is similar to his innocent quasi-Meinongianism. For his answer is: it does not have anything specific to do with denoting. The inverted commas just indicate, that the denoting phrase has been transformed in a *proper name* of the concept occurring as entity. Thanks to the sweeping nature of Frege's theory of sense and reference, Russell adopted something similar to the Fregean distinction between direct and indirect sense and reference. What initially had been construed as a nominalised denoting phrase, was now supposed to be a genuine denoting phrase containing such a proper name. Then, just *before* the conception of the ToD, Russell became aware of the inadequacy of the Fregean assistance. The adopted view leads to an unintended shift of reference. The alleged proper name embedded in the denoting phrase is itself nothing but an actually denoting phrase.

Chapter IV

Russell with Frege in the Gray's Elegy Argument

16 From OF to the GEA's dilemma

16.1 Correspondence and difference between OF and OD

In the previous chapter I have observed a chronological order of exposition. I have done so with respect to the GEA. In the present chapter the jump is made to the GEA itself. The relatively short but very eventful period between the moment Russell wrote the crucial passage in OF and the moment he wrote OD and decided to make use of material contained in OF, is left out. Being beyond the scope of the present chapter, it will be discussed in the next one.

How did Russell make use of OF in fashioning the GEA? OF §36, the passage immediately following the crucial section 35 quoted in 14.2, almost literally corresponds to GEA paragraph D and E (OD, paragraph 21 and 22). However, no other part of the GEA corresponds in that way to OF §35. Something very similar to the crucial passage cannot be found in it. Nevertheless something which is in the same way related to the copied part, actually is contained in the GEA, namely paragraph D. That is the paragraph where the 'happening' starts. It is followed by almost exactly the same text as the one following the crucial passage. Schematically: GEA paragraph D : GEA paragraph E+F = OF §35 : §36.

In my opinion this fact is significant enough to formulate the hypothesis that GEA paragraph D corresponds to the crucial passage. If this conjecture is right, then paragraph D must explain why the quasi-Fregean view fails. Nevertheless, in it, the essence of the crucial passage is put into a new form. Is it possible to reconstruct the transformation of OF §35 into GEA par. D? In my opinion it is. The following three elements, missing in the former passage, can be found in the latter one:

- a) The original example, namely "any man", is replaced by a definitely denoting phrase. This is quite a consequential and often forgotten shift. Its importance for the ToD will be discussed in the next chapter,

in 21.3. Anyhow, the problem discovered in OF is general and illustrated by an ambiguously denoting concept. Being general, it may equally well be illustrated by an unambiguously denoting concept. Up to here, the shift is innocent.

- b) The nature of the *failure* of the quasi-Fregean view is such, that some specific examples are more appropriate to illustrate it than others. If we substitute “the so and so” for Russell’s “C”, then the point in question may be put as follows. We want to speak about the meaning expressed by the phrase “the so and so”. According to the quasi-Fregean view, this is possible by means of a larger denoting concept in which the meaning we want to speak about occurs as non-denoting. That is why we speak in fact about the meaning of the so and so, *if there is any*, whereas we wanted to speak about the meaning of the non-denoting complex whose meaning is expressed by the denoting phrase “the so and so”. The best way to illustrate this is by taking an example that is such that the so and so, i.e., the *denotation* of the phrase “the so and so”, actually has a meaning. The first line of Gray’s Elegy meets this requirement.
- c) The third and last element by which GEA par. D differs from OF §35 is to be found in its second half, the passage beginning with the words “Similarly ‘the denotation of C’ does not mean ...”. What is the role played by this addition? Something like it is not contained in OF §35. Nevertheless it can be found in OF §37. There Russell says:

For the relations of meaning and denotation, it is instructive to observe the following pair of facts:

- (1) If C is a denoting complex, “the meaning of C” does not *denote* the *meaning* of C, but the meaning of the denotation of C.
- (2) If C is a denoting complex, “the denotation of C” does not *mean* the *denotation* of C, but “the denotation of C”.

In this rather puzzling passage, Russell not only takes notice of the relation of meaning and denotation, but also, on occasion of it, of the fact that the failure of the quasi-Fregean view regards both meaning and *denotation*. For the time being, I want to leave this text unexplained. Here I only want to highlight the twofold nature of the move made in it.

At first view the denotation seems to be taken into account for no other purpose than showing that the failure of the quasi-Fregean view is greater than we have supposed it to be. But on nearer scrutiny this cannot be a sound

explanation. For there is no real problem at all in getting the denotation we want to get. Without any difficulty we can speak about the first line of Gray's Elegy. In the previous sentence I have successfully done so by using the phrase "the first line of Gray's Elegy" in the way it is normally used.

However, this objection may also be applied to the meaning. If we so wish, we can successfully speak about the meaning expressed by the phrase "the first line of Gray's Elegy". In the previous sentence I have in fact done so. The problem Russell has in mind in the above-quoted passage must be a different one. He does not want to deny that we are able to obtain the meaning we want. The real difficulty is, that we are not able to get it in a *specific way*, a way that, for some reason or other, *ought* to be open as well, but in fact is blocked. And this very specific way is also blocked in the case of the denotation. For, as I have mentioned, but not explained in 12.1, according to the quasi-Fregean view, mediatism *must* be mitigated. It must be possible to speak about the meaning by means of that very same meaning as non-denoting or as complex. And if we take that for granted, then it is evident, that the failure to get the meaning in that specific way, also regards the denotation. For if we want to speak about the denotation of a complex, supposing that the complex is named and is neither denoted nor denoting, then we fail to get what we wanted in this case as well. If we get anything at all, then it is the denotation of the denotation we wanted to get.

This then is only one side of the move made in OF §37: making clear that the failure's extension is greater than we had supposed it to be. The other side of the same move leads to the reason behind the soundness of the quasi-Fregean view as being mitigated mediatism. This reason is equally greater and more fundamental than we have supposed it to be. Mitigated mediatism demands more and is more ambitious than we expected. It not only demands that the meaning we want to speak about participates in its being spoken about, but also that it participates in our speaking about its denotation *as such*, i.e. as denotation of the same complex, which is supposed to have that meaning.

16.2 Paragraph C as concerned with explaining ambiguity

Now this is exactly what is explained in GEA, paragraph C, i.e., in the paragraph immediately preceding that corresponding to OF's crucial passage. In OF, something like GEA paragraph C cannot be found, save the above-quoted §37. Now, in my opinion, this part of the GEA is much clearer and much more elaborate than OF §37. It actually not only highlights the obvious failure of

the quasi-Fregean view, but its virtue and soundness as well. Both sides are equally important. Without a failure there would not be any problem at all. But without a serious and inescapable requirement, there would be no problem either. The failure to fulfil an arbitrary or even unreasonable requirement cannot be serious at all. The more artificial and far-fetched the demand is, the more insignificant the failure to meet it. In order to understand the GEA, it is not sufficient to understand that something *fails*. The most important and challenging point is: to understand *what is wanted*.

Before quoting and discussing paragraph C, I need to say a few words about what precedes it. The role of paragraph B has clearly been explained in section 9.1. Russell wants to explain what the problem is about. Evidently, it is concerned with speaking about “the *meaning* of a denoting phrase as opposed to its *denotation*. The natural mode of doing so is by inverted commas.” Adding these inverted commas is sufficient to change the subject matter of discourse from the denotation to the meaning. Therefore, the situation is as follows. It seems to be possible to use one and the same denoting phrase in two different ways: without and with inverted commas. Both ways are different from a third possible use, namely quoting the phrase. Now, it is hardly possible to describe the difference between the first two modes of use without making use of the third. For in order to introduce some definite example, we first have to mention the phrase we are supposed to take. Then, ignoring the third mode of use, we consider the two other uses of that phrase. Now, Russell wants to use the quasi-variable C, without using phrase-quoting quotation marks in order to avoid confusing them with the relevant inverted commas. That is why, when he wants to mention the phrase, he just speaks about *the phrase* C. But when he speaks about C right away, he wants to speak about the denotation. In the last sentence of paragraph B and the first of paragraph C he says:

Thus taking any denoting phrase, say C, we wish to consider the relation between C and ‘C’, where the difference of the two is of the kind exemplified in the above two instances.

We say, to begin with, that when C occurs it is the denotation that we are speaking about; but when “C” occurs, it is the *meaning*.

In this passage the transition is made from the *difference* between C and “C” to the *relation* between them. These two elements constitute the crux of the problem as explained in the second part of paragraph C. The inverted commas seem to mark a slight and *subtle* difference. After all, it cannot be by accident that two different entities are indicated by means of different uses of one

and the *same* phrase. There must be a *reason* behind it, just as according to Aristotelians there is a reason why different kinds of things, such as a living being, a climate or urine may all be called healthy. A climate can be called healthy because it *promotes* the health of a living being, urine because it is a *sign* of it.

In scholasticism a lot of things have been said about this standard example. Probably Russell was not acquainted with these discussions on the topic of the so-called “analogy”. Nevertheless, Aristotle and his followers may help to clarify both the nature of the GEA and the reason why I suppose it to be very important. In the Aristotelian tradition, logic is supposed to precede metaphysics, and metaphysics to transcend logic. Equivocation may in fact play a role in logic, but according to the view in question, it *ought* to be avoided and actually *can* be avoided. For logic is confined to univocal terms. In metaphysics, however, equivocation cannot and ought not be avoided. For the notion of being is beyond all univocal categories. The categories are not kinds of beings, but *senses* of being.

Russell’s view differs significantly from this one. According to him, logic does not precede metaphysics.¹⁰⁷ A metaphysically neutral logic is an illusion. Logic has to do with the very notion of being and therefore is itself ‘transcendental’ and unrestricted. However, Russell adopts the traditional principle that in logic ambiguity ought and can be avoided. And that is of utmost importance to the GEA. It constitutes one of the rules of the game played in it. The ambiguity marked by the inverted commas must, on pain of contradiction, be explained by means of unambiguous terms. In other words: irreducible ambiguity is supposed to be logically impossible.

According to me, this axiom amounts to the same as externalism. I want to challenge externalism. As seen from this rather unorthodox point of view, Russell’s logic is too traditional. Nevertheless, I admire the GEA because it reveals the limits of externalism, although I quite well realize that it purports to disprove the possibility of denoting concepts.

16.3 The relation as “not merely linguistic through the phrase”

The relation of the meaning to the denotation, also mentioned in the GEA’s first introductory paragraph A, is discussed in paragraph C as follows:

¹⁰⁷ This point has also been discussed in 4.2.

Now the relation of meaning and denotation is not merely linguistic through the phrase: there must be a logical relation involved, which we express by saying that the meaning denotes the denotation.

The essential point is evidently, that the relation is “logical” and not “linguistic through the phrase”. What does this statement exclude? How would the relation be if it were “linguistic through the phrase”? In that case the phrase would play an essential role. Without language the relation would no longer hold. The relation of the meaning to the denotation would be based on a linguistic mediator in the same way as the relation of sister in law to mother in law is mediated by a male person who happens to be the former’s husband and the latter’s son. Without that man and without the institution of marriage the said relation would be destroyed. Applied to denoting, this would mean that the meaning denotes the denotation in virtue of its being expressed by a phrase or several phrases which on their own account have a denotation.

Indeed, this is in flat contradiction with the theory of denoting concepts. For according to that theory, a denoting phrase cannot denote on its own account. It denotes what it denotes in virtue of the fact that it expresses a meaning which on its own account denotes. The meaning need not be expressed in language in order to denote what it denotes. The relation of the meaning to the denotation would remain what it is, if language and its users were destroyed or had never existed.

Indeed, language is essential to the way *we* become aware of meanings. We need a phrase expressing a certain meaning in order to focus on it. Therefore, speaking about meanings without using denoting phrases is humanly impossible. But – and that is the crux – it must be possible to use the phrase, which is supposed to express the meaning, in such a way that both its meaning and its denotation are mentioned but *not that phrase*. It must be possible to express in language the true proposition that this meaning denotes its denotation without *mentioning* the phrase, i.e., without speaking *about* language. For that supposed fact or true proposition is according to the theory itself an extra-linguistic fact. Here we finally meet the reason, mentioned in 10.3, why one of the procedures proposed by Frege, is to be ruled out in this connection.

16.4 The difficulty as dilemma

The full importance of this requirement cannot be discussed without taking the remaining part of paragraph C into account. There Russell says:

But the difficulty which confronts us is that we cannot succeed in *both* preserving the connection of meaning and denotation *and* preventing them from being one and the same; also that the meaning cannot be got at except by means of denoting phrases. This happens as follows.

These words constitute the most important part of the GEA. They give in general terms a description of the *same* difficulty that will be illustrated as a happening in the following paragraphs. The correspondence is expressed by the word “this” in the last sentence. For that word indicates the difficulty or our being confronted with it. *That* happens as follows. To anyone who purports to give an exegesis of the GEA, this ought to be of crucial importance. Any explanation of what happens must meet the description of the difficulty. The exegesis of the text must be such that it enables us to understand how the difficulty is present *in* the happening. As far as I can see, no available interpretation meets this elementary requirement. How could that happen? The requirement itself has been overlooked. For it is impossible to see it from an externalist point of view. Externalism does not allow one and the same to be in different forms.

Evidently Russell puts the difficulty in the form of a *dilemma*. We cannot succeed in doing two different things *together*, which must be combined. We want both A and B. But the best we can achieve is either A without B or B without A. So, we are confronted with the unwanted *incompatibility* of A and B. A hidden law seems to forbid their union. This law does not force us to choose either of them. It even allows us to choose neither A nor B. But *if* we choose A, this forbids us to succeed in B. Or, what amounts to the same according to the law of contraposition: *if* we choose B, this forbids us to succeed in A. Success in one of them implies failure in the other. Nevertheless we want *both*. This is the *form* of the problem as presented by Russell in the GEA, the form of a dilemma. *Our* problem, therefore, is to understand its *content* in such a way that the dilemma can be proved to be *in* the happening described in the following paragraphs.

What is A and what is B? A is portrayed as *preserving the connection between meaning and denotation*, B as *preventing them*, i.e. meaning and denotation, *from being one and the same*. To this Russell adds the following: “Also that the meaning cannot be got at except by means of denoting phrases.” The word “also” may be construed in two different ways: either as indicating an extra difficulty or as indicating a new version or appearance of the very same difficulty. In my opinion, the latter alternative is to be preferred. The addition evidently corresponds to the previous turn of phrase “not linguistic through the phrase.” If the above-explained interpretation of these words is right, then

the addition following “also” is to be construed as follows. The words “getting the meaning by means of denoting phrases” simply mean: getting the meaning by *mentioning* one or more denoting phrases which express the meaning we want to speak about.

From this perspective, it is quite easy to understand the content of B. “Preventing meaning and denotation from being one and the same” is to be construed as: avoiding the obvious failure of the quasi-Fregean view, i.e., the failure discovered in OF §35. Russell’s description is somewhat elliptic. For the sake of convenience he ignores the subtle difference between the complex and its meaning, i.e., the denoting concept as non-denoting and as denoting. In the course of the happening actually an attempt is made to ignore it. Therefore, portraying the failure as “not preventing meaning and denotation from being the same” is more adequate than it seems to be. At least, given that the subtle difference between meaning and complex is being ignored, this depiction is accurate. We want to mention the complex (or its meaning via the complex), but instead of the complex we mention the denotation of the complex (and instead of the meaning of the complex the meaning, if there is any, of the denotation of the complex).

This interpretation of B leads to a conclusion that is in complete accordance with what I have said before. The problem is not, that we cannot succeed in getting the meaning we want. For as long as we do not care about the way we get it, there is no difficulty at all. We can get it by mentioning a phrase expressing the meaning in question and speaking about it as the meaning of that phrase. But according to Russell, the problem is that we cannot get the meaning we want except in that way. It is the only possible way. And that is problematic as soon as we realize its insufficiency. As faithful adherents of the theory of denoting concepts, we ought to want more. And we are even able to say what the ‘more’ is that we want. For we want, for example, to speak about the meaning of the phrase “the first line of Gray’s *Elegy*” in another way than we have just done, namely without mentioning that phrase.

16.5 “Preserving the connection” and the axiom of external difference

But why should we want that? Here the content of A comes in. We want to “preserve the connection of meaning and denotation”. But what does the word “connection” mean in this connection? Is it just synonymous with “relation”? I do not know. Nevertheless, I am quite sure, that the use of the word “preserve” does not make sense, unless both the relation of the meaning to the denotation

is involved and something different from the relation itself, namely the way it appears in the description of meaning and denotation. Preserving the connection between meaning and denotation is opposed to ignoring it. And we evidently ignore that the relation is logical and not linguistic through the phrase, if we think it is sufficient to speak about both denotation and meaning as denotation and meaning of a phrase we mention. By mentioning the phrase we get what we want, we prevent meaning and denotation from being one and the same, we succeed in avoiding the curious shift of reference, but we do not preserve the relation. Quite the contrary, we ignore it.

But that is not the only possible way to ignore it. The relation of the meaning to the denotation is a many-one relation. Each meaning has one denotation, but one and the same denotation may be denoted by different meanings. According to the axiom of externalism, the difference between the meanings must be outside the denotation. The latter is supposed to be absolutely identical with itself. Differing from itself is supposed to be contradictory. That is why the substitution principle mentioned in puzzle (1), is just a specific application of the main principle of externalism.¹⁰⁸ If the Morningstar is not something different from the Eveningstar, then the Morningstar cannot differ in any respect from the Eveningstar. Therefore, whatever is true of the Morningstar must also be true of the Eveningstar.

I challenge the validity of the substitution principle in order to highlight the GEA's validity and in order to clarify my exegesis. Preserving the relation leads to difficulties, provided it is conceived in an externalist fashion. "There is no backward road from denotation to meanings", as Russell says in paragraph F. If you ignore this, remaining faithful to externalism, then you do not preserve the relation. Then you think that the inverted commas may just be construed as "the meaning of...". Preserving the externally conceived relation of the meaning to the denotation means: realizing that the *normal* use of a denoting phrase cannot be its *primary* use in the sense in which health as said of a living being is supposed to be primary (*primum analogatum*). For the name of the meaning cannot be derived from the name of the denotation.

The quasi-Fregean view does not ignore this. For it does not suppose that it makes sense to speak of the meaning of the denotation. It assumes, that the normal use of a denoting phrase can be explained. Both meaning and denotation can be named by means of an extra-linguistic mediator, namely the complex. It is supposed to have a complex proper name. The complex has one meaning and both the complex and the meaning have one denotation. In this

108 Cf. 10.3.

way the ambiguity marked by the unexplained inverted commas in paragraph B is explained as due to the relation of the meaning to the denotation. The relation is manifested in a connection between the expressions by means of which we speak about a particular meaning and its denotation. There is a partial overlap just as in a somewhat more simple way the relation of the solar system to its centre of mass is made manifest in a connection between “the Solar System” and “the centre of mass of the Solar System”. It is not by accident that there is a partial overlap.

In this discussion I have tried to make clear that the GEA, although evidently derived from OF, cannot be reduced to it. The GEA is based on a new perspective, namely that the problem discovered in OF §35 may be put in the form of a dilemma: either trying to preserve the relation of the meaning to the denotation and consequently failing to get the meaning *or* getting it without preserving the relation. Putting the problem into this new form presupposed a broader perspective on the virtue of the quasi-Fregean view. In the next section I shall continue my exegesis in discussing how *it*, i.e., being confronted with the dilemma, happens.

17 This happens as follows: the GEA’s structure

17.1 Detecting the main turning point

It is impossible to deduce from Russell’s abstract account of the problem, how “it” happens. Even if we accept what I have argued for in the previous section, namely that the happening starts with the quasi-Fregean view, its sequel cannot be foreseen. Nevertheless, something else can be deduced from the exegesis of paragraph C put forward in the previous section, namely the *criterion* by means of which the happening as actually described by Russell may be screened. We know what we are looking for, if we try to find the essential turning point corresponding with the nature of the dilemma. What is more, if the happening starts with the quasi-Fregean view, then it starts with a very serious and subtle attempt to speak about the meaning in *preserving* the connection of meaning and denotation. We know why this attempt fails. We know that it fails to get the desired meaning. We know that it will not succeed in “preventing meaning and denotation from being one and the same”.

But we do not know beforehand what will be the follow-up of this discovery. Will the adherent of the quasi-Fregean view without further ado conclude that the attempt to preserve the connection is to be abandoned? If

so, then the essential turning point is to be found there. However, although we cannot foresee on account of paragraph C whether it will actually happen like that, we can foresee something else. For we know that the decision to abandon immediately the quasi-Fregean view as the only possible way of preserving the connection of meaning and denotation, would be premature. For in fact it is one of two (and the only two) essentially different possible ways of preserving the connection, i.e., of making manifest the externally conceived many-one relation of the meaning to the denotation. As seen from an externalist viewpoint, it is impossible to speak about the meaning by means of the denotation. Therefore, there must be something else about which we can speak immediately. It has to act as point of reference by means of which its relatives can be mentioned. This item *either* must be something between meaning and denotation, i.e., something which differs from the denotation by its having one meaning, *or* it must be the meaning itself. Other possibilities are not available. From this it may be inferred that the GEA would be much more systematic and imperative, if the decision to abandon the attempt to preserve the connection between meaning and denotation were *not* made immediately after the discovery of the quasi-Fregean view's failure.

Now, in fact, this decision is *not* made. For in the second half of paragraph E a new possible view, different from the quasi-Fregean one, is introduced, namely the one mentioned in 13.2 as "indifferent immediatism". It consists in rejecting the assumed difference between meaning and complex. The two are now deemed to be identical. Nevertheless the complex is still supposed to be immediately accessible. The denotation can be mentioned by means of the complex. The meaning being the same as the complex can be mentioned immediately. This, then, is the second and last possible way of preserving the connection.

Therefore, the essential turning point is to be located where this second view has proved to be insufficient as well. Now, the argument against it is to be found in the first two sentences of paragraph F. In the next sentence, the one beginning with the words "Thus to speak about C itself...." a new possible view is introduced. There the attempt to preserve the connection between meaning and denotation is actually abandoned. There, between the words "The centre of mass of the Solar System is a point" and the words "Thus to speak of C itself...", the dividing line is to be drawn. It marks both the essential structure of the happening and the way the happening corresponds to "this", i.e., the dilemma sketched in paragraph C.

As said in 16.1, paragraphs E and F almost literally correspond to what in OF immediately succeeds the crucial passage. Therefore, this part of the happening may be equally construed as a verbatim account of what happened

after the discovery. As seen from this perspective, it might seem to be no more than just a report of what happened to happen in Russell's mind at that very moment. However, it is quite surprising that it equally well meets the systematic requirements explained above!

As seen from the systematic perspective of paragraph C two questions are to be asked about the happening, namely where its essential turning point is to be found and also, whether, and if so where, the other side of the dilemma, the problem introduced by the word "also", is illustrated. The latter question has not yet been discussed. It must be answered negatively. No particular part of the happening corresponds to the problem "that the meaning cannot be got at except by means of denoting phrases". Nowhere in the GEA is the successful attempt discussed to speak about the meaning as the meaning of some denoting phrase. This aspect of the problem is to be construed as an alternative description of the dilemma as a whole, not as a description of one of the things that will happen.

17.2 The GEA's dialectical slant

Once upon a time Russell had been a neo-Hegelian. It is beyond doubt that he not only studied works of Bradley and other then prominent neo-Hegelians, but at least some parts of Hegel's *Logic* as well. As far as I can see, it is very improbable that he ever read the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and even more improbable that in writing the GEA, he had Hegel in mind, let alone the *Phenomenology*. Nevertheless, there is a striking, twofold similarity between the GEA and the first chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, which is entitled "Sensuous Certainty". Firstly, both discuss an unintended shift of reference. In Hegel's case, it has to do with what in his opinion deserves to be called the most primitive, undeveloped view of reality: whatever is, is an un-mediated 'this'. Hegel wants to prove that, as soon as you try to say what you mean, you fail. For what you *say* is universal, whereas what you *mean* is something absolutely isolated and particular.

Secondly, not only in its first chapter, but also throughout the whole book, save in its last chapter, Hegel wants to describe an *experience* of something *we* (philosophers) already know and understand. This is similar to the way Russell proceeds in the GEA. For the abstract dilemma expounded in paragraph C is introduced ahead of the events, ahead of the happening or concrete experience of being confronted with the difficulty, viz. the incompatibility of two equally sound and important requirements. Its acceptance as inevitable defines the end of the story.

Therefore, the happening has to start with *not yet* accepting this incompatibility. We, poor readers of the GEA, are not supposed to take what is announced in paragraph C for granted. It is in need of a proof. And it can only be proved by what happens if we stubbornly try to preserve *both* the connection *and* the difference as exemplified in paragraph B. We are not prepared to accept simply that it is impossible, unless experience forces us to do so. And experience only can be imperative after all possibilities have been tried out. This quasi-Hegelian mode of expression is not just rhetorically adequate, but historically as well! For, as said before, the quasi-dialectical movement of experience is an almost literal report of what Russell himself has experienced in OF §35 and 36. The unexpected failure of the quasi-Fregean view came as such a surprise to him that he did not dare believe his eyes. Feeling its fundamental importance, he wanted to check whether it really was inescapable.

17.3 Four stages and three transitions

In fact the quasi-dialectical movement is not very complicated at all. The essential conclusion is reached in three turns. Then, in the GEA but not in OF, it is reinforced by means of the link with puzzle (1). This leads to the final conclusion that the theory in question is not able to cope with the curiosity of George IV. The full acceptance of the difficulty announced in paragraph C, namely that preserving both the connection and the difference is impossible, is reached after the rejection of three preceding views. Each of them differs from the point of view of the essential conclusion in *not yet* fully accepting the said incompatibility. Including the final one, there are four different stations to be distinguished and three transitions: from the first to the second station, from the second to the third and from the third to the last.

Which evidence does justify my claim that four views and three transitions are involved? Textual evidence, not abstract reasoning. In case of a difficult philosophical text, it is often quite well possible to grasp its main structure on the basis of significant turns of phrase, even before its content is fully understood. In my opinion the GEA is such a text. The first transition evidently is made halfway through paragraph E, where Russell says: "This leads us to say...". In the remaining part of that paragraph the second view, consisting in not distinguishing the meaning from the complex anymore, is introduced. In paragraph F Russell starts by giving reasons why this second view is to be rejected. Then, after the second sentence of the paragraph, i.e., at the main point of division mentioned before, the third view is introduced

by means of the words “Thus to speak of C itself...”. In the remaining part of paragraph F, the nature of this view is elaborated. Paragraph G starts with the ultimate conclusion: “Thus it would seem that C and “C” are different entities, such that “C” denotes C.” Then this third view is rejected as well. It evidently is rejected because the connection is not preserved. Russell says: “but this cannot be an explanation, because the relation of “C” to C remains wholly mysterious”.

Having established the structure of the GEA, the remaining task is to understand its content, i.e., both the nature of the four views involved in it and the nature of the three transitions between them. With the help of the historical background discussed in the previous chapter, this task should not exceed our forces. Note, however, that his help might also be misleading. It would be historically unjustified to make excessive use of it. For it happens to be a historical fact that the GEA is not been written in order to inform the reader of OD about its genesis. Material from OF has only been used in it because Russell deemed it suitable for the purpose of OD. Furthermore, the passage in OF corresponding with the GEA is itself not an autobiographical glance back, but an account of thoughts raised by a freshly made discovery.

That is why neither all the possible points of view discussed in the previous sections are to be found in the GEA, nor all the four points of view actually involved in it have been extensively treated in the previous sections. In fact, we are only acquainted with *three* of the four perspectives discussed in the GEA. The first is the quasi-Fregean view formerly embraced by Russell, and which I have called *subtle mitigated mediatism*. The second point of view might be called, for reasons mentioned in 13.2, *indifferent immediatism*. Russell had never adopted this view, although he had actually considered it in OF as a possible escape from the difficulty. As immediatism it resembles the innocent view he had once actually adopted in POM §56. But because of its indifference, it differs from it. And in virtue of its being a version of immediatism, it also differs from the “indifferent mediatism” I have introduced in 13.2 in order to explain the subtlety of the first view. Therefore, a lot of subtlety is required in order not to confuse the second view with its relatives. In this section I have mentioned it as the only possible way, different from the first one, to preserve the externally conceived relation.

The third view has actually been discussed in 12.1 as opposed to the quasi-Fregean view in virtue of its not being mitigated. It might be called *unmitigated mediatism*. The requirement that the meaning we want to speak about participates in its own being spoken about, is abandoned. Russell never adopted it, but, just as the second view, it is actually considered in OF as a

possible way out, which eventually appears to lead to ignoring the logical relation. That is why it represents the other side of the dilemma: accepting the difference without preserving the connection.

Considered as such, i.e., as leaving the relation mysterious, the third view leads to the fourth one, i.e., to accepting the dilemma as inevitable. For the sake of convenience I shall call it *impossibilism*. For according to it denoting cannot be attributed to a meaning or concept. Something like a meaning denoting its denotation is impossible. Russell, of course, actually adopted just this view. It is the point of view from which he wrote the GEA. It equally is the point of view from which in its paragraph C the dilemma is announced. In the previous section it has been extensively discussed.

In view of the question whether, and if so, how a denoting concept can occur as subject of a proposition, Russell actually adopted three different views, the innocent one, the quasi-Fregean one and finally impossibilism. In making the transition from the second to the third view, he actually considered two hypothetical intermediate alternatives. The GEA is written from the point of view of impossibilism. It shows in the form of a quasi-dialectical argument the road from the quasi-Fregean view to impossibilism via the two minor stations. The innocent view is not mentioned. It only helped Russell to introduce the inverted commas, marking the difference between meaning and denotation in paragraph B. But it is not externalist enough to play a part in the happening. For in supposing the proper name of the denoting concept to be derived from the denoting phrase expressing the concept and naming its denotation, it surreptitiously makes use of a backward road from denotation to meaning.

18 Equality and inequality between the first and the second view

18.1 General importance of comparing the two

Now we seem to be sufficiently prepared for reading the GEA in order to understand its structured content. Nevertheless, before embarking upon the dialectic of the argument, one question remains to be discussed: What is the importance of the difference between the first view, the quasi-Fregean one, and its immediate successor? At first sight this question seems to regard only paragraph E. There Russell suggests that the failure of the first view “makes us to say” that the supposed difference between meaning and complex is to be abandoned. However, what I want to discuss in the present section is not the quasi-dialectical reason behind this transition, but the possible equality and

inequality between the two views involved in it.

At first sight this question only seems to be relevant when this transition is actually made. However, the move from the quasi-Fregean view to its indifferent rival presupposes that the latter constitutes a possible option. In rejecting the previously supposed difference between meaning and complex, it excludes the subtlety of the quasi-Fregean view. Similarly, being subtle, the latter view excludes its indifferent rival, as has been discussed in section 13. However, the issue deserves to be reconsidered in the light of the GEA. Within the setting of the GEA, the two act as two possible ways of preserving the connection between C and “C”.

At first sight the difference between the two approaches seems to be less important than what they have in common. After all, if what has been said in the previous section is right, their distinction precedes the essential bifurcation marked by the dilemma expounded in paragraph C: either preserving the connection and not the difference or preserving the difference and not the connection. Still, the assumption that the subdivision into two specific modes of preserving the connection is of minor importance to preserving the connection in general seems to be inspired by the axiom of externality. Rejecting this axiom as such, and not only some of its particular applications, is quite essential to my approach to the GEA. In my opinion it is impossible to understand fully what preserving the connection between “C” and C means, unless attention is paid to its specific varieties. Therefore, what seems to be no more than a subordinate division may quite well help to exemplify one of the horns of the main dilemma. What is more, it may even help to exemplify both horns. For both the first and the second view fail to prevent meaning and denotation from being one and the same. They fail in what constitutes the other horn of the main dilemma. Its two sides are not opposed as A versus B, but rather as AB versus BA. While opposed to each other, they are *in* each other.

Even if what I have said thus far is right, even if the minor dilemma is to be taken into account in order to understand the main one, even then there seems to be no logical order between the first and the second view. With respect to the rules of the game fixed in paragraph C, the two seem to be equal. They both score the same number of points, namely one. To this extent there seems to be no other than an autobiographical reason behind Russell's choice to start his account of the happening with the quasi-Fregean view and not with its less subtle rival. The setting of the GEA seems to be such that subtlety does not count.

In my opinion the criteria expounded in paragraph C may be construed in

two different ways: either purely formally or also intrinsically. As seen from the former perspective both views are equal indeed. Both fail in preventing meaning and denotation from being one and the same and both do *not fail* in preserving their connection. But ‘not failing’ is susceptible to difference in quality, which is not beyond the scope of paragraph C. The subtlety of the quasi-Fregean view serves a quite important goal: displaying denoting as essentially associated with meaning, i.e., with occurring as meaning or rather playing a meaning-role.

The second view differs from the first both in being less faithful to the quintessence of the theory of denoting concepts and in being more experienced. This twofold difference in quality marks the general drift of the GEA as a whole. In virtue of its being the most faithful and the less experienced stage, the quasi-Fregean view deserves to be treated first. As such it is farthest away from the GEA’s dialectical conclusion.

In the following subsections I shall start in comparing the two views from the purely formal perspective. Subsequently three points will be discussed: their similarity in explaining the absence of inverted commas in case of the denotation, their dissimilarity in explaining the inverted commas and finally their equality in failing to get what they want. This section will be concluded by a discussion of the above-mentioned difference in quality.

18.2 Equality as for the denotation

The common starting point of both views is that the *normal* use of a denoting phrase, its use without inverted commas, cannot be *primary*. For if C occurs, we are speaking about the denotation. But according to the axiom of externality, if different meanings or complexes have the same denotation, those differences must, on pain of contradiction, be outside the denotation they share.

Therefore, there is no backward road from denotation to meaning. Anyhow, whether there is, or is not, any difference between meaning and complex, neither the meaning nor the complex can be called after the denotation. Something else must act as that from which the other(s) derive their name. And this ‘something else’ must be the complex as named anyhow. The GEA is based on the assumption that if the connection between C and “C” can be preserved at all, the complex is the only possible ministering angel. In fact the complex is nothing else but what in 11.2 I have called the denoting concept in its extraordinary occurrence as non-denoting and not denoted.

As far as the denotation is concerned, both views agree. Just as the primary use must be extraordinary, so the ordinary use, the use of the phrase in speaking about the denotation, must be secondary, i.e., derived from its primary

use as the name of the complex. This primary use is supposed to be concealed in the normal use just as the relation ‘promoting’ is concealed in the meaning of the word “healthy” when applied to conditions of life. In case of the denotation, the relation is *denoting*. It seems not to be concealed at all. But that is due to the fact that we, as adherents of the theory of denoting concepts, actually use it. But in normal discourse a phrase which is called ‘denoting’ by us is used in complete silence about denoting. People who never heard of denoting phrases or denoting concepts nevertheless use phrases expressing concepts Russell baptized ‘denoting’. Just as in order to speak prose, you need not be acquainted with the notion of prose, so you may use denoting phrases without having the slightest idea about what denoting is. But according to the first two views discussed in the GEA it is impossible to *explain* the ambiguity of denoting phrases without being acquainted with the notion of denoting.

The normal use of a denoting phrase, which is indicated by Russell by means of the character C without inverted commas, is to be analyzed as the denotation of the complex itself, just as ‘healthy’ when said of food, is to be analyzed as promoting health itself. Indicating the functional addition “the denotation of ...” by $D()$, we may say that $C = D(C \text{ itself})$ and indicating C itself in bold type, we get: $C \equiv D(\mathbf{C})$.

But as long as the identity sign is construed in the way in which it is normally used in connection with denoting phrases, that is not sufficient. For normally, it is used to indicate identity of denotation. The denoting phrase “the author of *Waverley*” differs in complexity and meaning from “the author of *Ivanhoe*”. Nevertheless it is true that the author of *Waverley* = the author of *Ivanhoe*. The proposed analysis of C however purports to provide a paraphrase of denoting phrases just as the ToD purports to provide a paraphrase of *sentences* containing denoting phrases. Therefore, in order to summarize in a formula what the two views in question have in common, we must use the Fregean symbol \equiv for identity of meaning or complexity: $C \equiv D(\mathbf{C})$.

In explaining how the two views are to be applied to the denotation, I have introduced bold type in order to indicate the complex itself. Instead of bold type I could have used a special kind of inverted commas. But according to the views in question there is no need to do so, because the transformation into bold type will spontaneously take place as soon as the implicit addition “the denotation of...” is rendered explicit. For what remains of C, if that hidden addition is revealed, will of course be different from C. It will not be represented by a denoting phrase, but by a non-denoting name of the complex itself. The phrase as a whole is supposed to be denoting in virtue of the functional addition concealed in it, just as the phrase “the centre of mass of the Solar System” is not denoting because the Solar System is mentioned in it, but because of what precedes that proper name.

18.3 Difference in explaining the inverted commas

According to the quasi-Fregean view C and “ C ” differ from each other as $D(C)$ and $M(C)$. Strictly the inverted commas cannot be construed as symbolizing a functional addition. For in that case the C between them would be the same as the C without them. And the denotation cannot act as argument of a function whose value is supposed to be the meaning or the complex. There is no backward road. Therefore, although of course the inverted commas *are* an addition to C , they symbolize something else, namely the substitution of one functional addition, namely $M()$, for another one, namely $D()$, whereas the argument they have in common is not C but C .

According to the second view, there is no need to distinguish the meaning from the complex. Therefore, the difference and connection between C and “ C ” is to be explained as $D(C)$ versus C . The inverted commas, which of course are an addition to C , are now supposed to symbolize a substraction, namely the substraction of $D()$ from $D(C)$. In so far, they resemble additions like “in itself”, “pure”, “neat” or “bare”. They do not of course, symbolize the inverse of the function $D()$. For such a function cannot exist if there is no backward road from denotation to complex. The inverted commas are supposed to symbolize the deletion of the functional addition hidden in C . In the same fashion the primary use of “healthy” could be defined in saying: it is what remains of “healthy” as said of life conditions, if the unuttered relation of promoting is taken away.

18.4 Parity in failing to preserve the difference

The failure of the two views is indeed slightly different, but essentially the same. For the principle of the happening sketched by Russell simply is, that the desired transformation of C into C does not take place. As far as the proposed paraphrase of C is concerned, the result is of course exactly the same. Both views want to speak about C or $D(C)$, but in fact they speak about $D(C)$, i.e. about the denotation (if there is any) of the denotation they want to speak about. The failure is very grave indeed. It overshadows the ambition to express the same meaning as the one expressed by the phrase C . If the proposed articulation of C were adequate, then a fortiori $D(C)$ would denote the same as C . But, in fact, if it denotes something at all, it denotes something else. Thus, a fortiori, the proposed analysis is wrong.

The adherent of the quasi-Fregean view wants to speak about “ C ” in describing

it as $M(C)$. But in fact $M(C)$ is made the subject of discourse. In speaking about the meaning, we actually speak about (if there is any) the meaning of what is denoted by the meaning we want to speak about. In case of the second view, the shift of reference is somewhat less complicated. We want to speak about “ C ” or C , but in fact are speaking about C , i.e. about the denotation of the meaning (or complex) we want to speak about.

18.5 Philosophical inequality: meaning and complexity

Although in view of the formal criteria expounded in paragraph C the quasi-Fregean view is matched by its less complicated rival, from a philosophical perspective it is superior. This point is of pivotal importance to the structure of the GEA. For as I have explained in the previous section, the argument results in the dissociation of meaning and denoting. Now, as being opposed to this final conclusion, the quasi-Fregean view is superior. That is why it deserves to be treated first. Irrespective of its once having been adopted by Russell, it constitutes the counterpart of the GEA’s conclusion, offering maximal resistance towards it and being farthest away from it.

According to the quasi-Fregean view the meaning is to be distinguished from the complex itself, because denoting is essentially supposed to be a peculiar relation of a peculiar kind of concept *as concept*, i.e. as playing a *meaning-role*, to something the proposition is about. The so-called complex itself is in fact nothing else but the denoting concept as playing an *entity-role*. In assuming that the meaning is to be identified with the complex, the first step is made towards dissociating meaning from denoting. For according to the latter view denoting is no longer essentially associated with playing a role different from the one played by something the proposition is about. Irrespective of how they occur, some complex meanings are supposed to have a denotation. If we want to speak about the meaning, it is sufficient to get it as an entity. This, I think, is the view introduced in paragraph E where Russell says:

...when we distinguish meaning and denotation, we must be dealing with the meaning: the meaning has denotation and is a complex, and there is not something other than the meaning, which can be called the complex, and be said to have both meaning and denotation. The right phrase, on the view in question, is that some meanings have denotations.

The main difficulty in understanding the subtle distinction between meaning

and complex is due to Russell's terminology. It suggests that if their difference has anything to do with complexity, the complex must be more complex than the meaning. In that case it seems to deserve the title "complex" because it pre-eminently is complex. And if that is not what Russell had in mind, then the difference between meaning and complex must be construed as a difference in something else.

However, this quite natural assumption is false. While the distinction certainly has to do with complexity, still the complex is supposed to be less *complex than the meaning*. This appears from several passages in OF preceding the crucial one. For example, in §19 (p.373) Russell says:

The broad rule is that when complexes occur as *meaning*, their complexity is essential, and their constituents are constituents of any complex containing the said complexes; but when complexes occur as *entities*, their unity is what is essential, and they are not to be split into constituents.

The nature of this view may be explained by applying the axiom of externality to subject and predicate. It will require some effort to do so; for both the inclination to adopt the said axiom and the inclination not to go too far in carrying it out consistently, are very strong indeed. When we see a concrete thing, say a tree, we are spontaneously prepared to assume that it is one complex. It has different branches, maybe even leaves and flowers. Furthermore, it shows a great variety of properties. These are supposed to be *in* it. In short, we supposed to see what Aristotle and his followers have called a concrete *substance*.

Now, we may make use of this philosophical notion in order to elaborate the view of common sense further as follows. We say that eventually everything either is a substance or is in a substance as its private property. Whatever is general is conceptual; it only exists *in* what is less general. And ultimately the less general must exist in something that is absolutely non-general, an individual substance having all kinds of properties in it without being itself in something else.

On occasion of his study of Leibniz, Russell realized that the logic and metaphysics of substance is repressive. Individuals swallow up whatever is not individual. Ultimately neither space, nor time, nor universals nor relations can be supposed to be real. For there cannot be anything *between* individuals nor anything they *share*. They cannot be *together*. Therefore, there even cannot be plurality, for only together many individuals are many.

From this Russell not only concluded that it has become necessary “to base metaphysics on some notion other than that of substance”¹⁰⁹, but also that an appeal to the notion of being-in must be reduced to a minimum. The latter assumption amounts to the same as the axiom of externality. Occurring in a proposition is supposed to be the only acceptable form of being-in. The propositions constituents are deemed to be in the proposition but not in each other.¹¹⁰

As applied to the above-mentioned tree, this leads to the following view. Many different things are true of it. Both the tree and what is true of it occur in true propositions or facts about it. But what is true of the tree is not *in* the tree itself. The diversity of properties and relations must be outside the one subject having them. In the facts about the tree, the tree itself occurs as *entity*, i.e., as devoid of all change and complexity. Indeed, there actually is complexity. And if we look at the tree we may see complexity. But in fact we see a complexity of complex *facts* about something simple.¹¹¹ In giving an account of what we think we see, we confuse the thing with the facts about it.

If you want to see meanings, you cannot see them with your bodily eyes. You have to think about the tree and look sideward with your mind’s eye to what is true about it. But as soon as you start to think *about* what is true about the tree, you get it as *entity*, not as *meaning*. One of the predicates, which are true of that entity, is the predicate *complex*. But, just as the properties of the tree are not in the tree, so complexity is not in what is called complex. Having

109 Russell (1900), §71, p.126.

110 Cf. 0.3, 22.2 and 25.3. In 9.2 it has been said that Russellian things resemble substances, because they cannot occur in a proposition otherwise than as something the proposition is about. Nevertheless, they differ from substances because they do not have anything in them. Russellian propositions also resemble substances, but in a different way. Just as it is supposed to be true of substances that whatever is real, either is a substance or is in a substance, so it is supposed to be true of Russellian propositions, that whatever is real, either is a proposition or occurs in a proposition. However Russellian propositions differ from substances because they are much less possessive. They do not have anything private in them. Each constituent of a proposition also occurs in other propositions. If occurring in a proposition is supposed to be the only acceptable form of being-in, then the unity of the proposition becomes a serious problem. See POM Ch. XVI, pp.137-142. Stevens (2005) has taken the problem of the unity of the proposition as a clue to Russell’s development. I think it is actually a clue to his development *after* his “revolt into pluralism”, not a clue as to the revolt itself. It is a consequence of the way Russell abandoned continental philosophy.

111 See POM §47, p.44 “...every term is immutable and indestructible. What a term is, it is, and no change can be conceived in it which would not destroy its identity and make it another term.”

realized this, we may feel the need to speak about what is true about the tree not as entity, but as meaning, i.e., as revealing complexity. Then we may use a denoting concept and speak about the *meaning of the complex*.

In the above-mentioned case we want to make use of denoting in order to speak about a non-denoting concept as concept. The quasi-Fregean view, however, is conceived in order to speak about a denoting concept as concept, or – what amounts to the same – as actually denoting. But essentially the ambition is the same: speaking about the complexity elsewhere revealed by a concept, which occurs as entity, i.e., not as revealing complexity but only as something of which it is true that it is a complex.

From POM onward Russell makes use of the notion of complexity in order to clarify and justify the distinction between meaning and denotation. Primarily ambiguously denoting concepts are supposed to be of greatest importance. They enable us to deal with infinite plurality by means of propositions with finite complexity. In this case the less complex is the denoting concept, the more complex its denotation. In the manuscripts written after POM and before OD gradually more attention is paid to unambiguously denoting concepts. What remains however, is the use of the notion of complexity in order to justify the distinction between meaning and denotation. But it is used the other way round. A definite description may reveal a much greater complexity than its denotation. This idea is also to be found in OD, paragraph 11, where the favourite example of the centre of mass of the Solar System at the beginning of the twentieth century is used to illustrate it. In this case, of course, the meaning is complex, whereas its denotation is devoid of complexity.

Viewed from this perspective, the essential point is that the meaning denotes in virtue of its complexity, i.e., in virtue of the complexity *revealed* by its occurring as meaning. And revealing complexity is supposed to be different from *being* something of which the predicate ‘complex’ is true.

19 Russell’s puzzling account of the first view’s failure

19.1 From the main problem of exegesis to the most conspicuous one

In the first chapter of his *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel puts considerable effort into explaining both the nature of the view in question and why it deserves to be first. What is more, Hegel also carefully distinguishes between the view whose insufficiency is to be proved and the happening or experience which is supposed to prove it. These issues are all of them relevant to the GEA as well,

especially to paragraph D. However, Russell proceeds much more carelessly. He just starts with the happening itself. We, poor readers of OD, see the slapstick, we see the banana skin, we see the slip caused by it, but we fail to understand *to whom* the happening happens, let alone why the story of misfortunes has to start here. Obviously, Russell was so much acquainted with the view in question, that he gravely underestimated the reader's risk of misunderstanding it, of getting confused and eventually supposing the argument to be confused. In this way, oblivious of any harm and even before having conceived or adopted the official story, he paved the way of its rise in promoting the GEA's eclipse.

In my opinion the general lack of understanding of the GEA is mainly due to the lack of attention paid to the question why it is so difficult to understand it. In spite of their disagreements, all commentators share the opinion that the text is very obscure and enigmatic indeed. All make an attempt to solve its numerous problems of interpretation. But they all fail to pay sufficient attention to the problems themselves. Above all, they want to go *away* from those problems to their solution.¹¹² That is why they failed to see Russell's failure. They did not even look for, let alone try to reconstruct, the missing link between paragraph C and D. Instead, they plunged into the most eye-catching difficulty: Russell's own use of inverted commas.

19.2 Russell's use of inverted commas

After having made an attempt to reconstruct the missing link, I shall now try to disentangle Russell's use of inverted commas. Evidently, it cannot be deduced from what has been said in the previous section. But it is equally evident that it cannot be understood without any knowledge of both the nature of the view discussed in paragraph D and the nature of its failure. Both the factual details of the text and the reconstruction of what is behind it are to be taken into account. They have to meet each other. As far as I can see, such an approach leads to the following results:

- a) Russell makes actually use of two types of inverted commas: double and simple ones. This is only a device of punctuation. In the original version of the text, simple quotation marks are used in order to indicate their being enclosed by quotation marks. Inverted commas are double in order to mark their not being enclosed. This

¹¹² Cf. as antidote the Cartesian principle mentioned in 0.3.

typographical distinction does not reveal anything about their possible meaning.¹¹³

- b) One mode of using inverted commas is obviously to be found in the text, namely the inverted commas introduced in paragraph B. They constitute the subject matter of the problem discussed in the GEA. They are to be explained. But in the attempt to explain them, they are of course not used.
- c) At least one possible other mode of using inverted commas is to be considered: using them in order to quote an expression, more in particular a denoting phrase. However, this use cannot occur in the attempt to explain the inverted commas introduced in paragraph B. For according to paragraph C it must be possible to speak about the meaning expressed by a denoting phrase in its normal use without mentioning that phrase.¹¹⁴ For the relation of meaning to denotation is not linguistic through the phrase. And quoting a phrase is one possible way of mentioning it.

However, from this principle it cannot be deduced that in Russell's discussion of the problem no quotations occur. For in fact he is not just making an attempt to explain the inverted commas introduced in paragraph B, observing the rules fixed in paragraph C, he is also speaking *about* it and about its failure. In that connection quoting a denoting phrase might be helpful, for example, in order to successfully indicate the wanted meaning.

As far as I can see, Russell had decided not to quote denoting phrases at all. Indeed, the first line of Gray's Elegy is actually quoted by means of inverted commas. But the first line of Gray's Elegy is not a denoting phrase. In speaking about denoting phrases, Russell prefers the character C, indicating complexity. And, as explained in 16.2, he speaks about the phrase *by the way* as phrase C. The reason behind this strategy apparently is that he only wants us to take a phrase in order to consider two modes of its use, its normal use in order to speak about the denotation, and its use in order to speak about the meaning expressed by it in its normal use. Quoting the phrase could possibly suggest that a third mode of use is to be considered as well. For in fact quoting a phrase is using it in order to speak about it. In my opinion, trying to explain quoting quotation marks in observance of the axiom of externality leads to essentially the same problem as

113 In Russell (1956), pp.41-56 the simple and double inverted commas are exchanged.

114 See 16.3.

the one discussed in the GEA. I assume that Russell was not aware of this correspondence. Anyhow, in speaking about denoting phrases, he avoided quoting quotation marks, because he did not want to speak about them. They were beyond the scope of the problem as conceived by him.

- d) If the decision is taken not to use inverted commas in order to mention denoting phrases, then two possible modes of use remain available which both might be useful in the discussion of the failure of the quasi-Fregean view. In the previous section, I have introduced bold type in order to explain both the ambition of the two views in question and their failure. Both views are based on the belief that there is no need for bold type or something similar, because the change from *C* to **C** will take place automatically as soon as *C* occurs as argument of the function *D*() or (in case of the quasi-Fregean view) of *M*(). But as soon as the failure is discussed, the distinction between *C* and **C** is relevant again. It is relevant to describing the transformation, which is expected, but does not take place.

Instead of bold type I could have introduced a specific kind or a particular mode of using inverted commas. They could be called *complex-mentioning* inverted commas. According to both the quasi-Fregean view and its indifferent rival, the inverted commas thus used are superfluous. For I use them in order to introduce what according to them is the primary use of a denoting phrase. But the happening consists in their appearing not to be superfluous. If they are not used, we do not get the meaning we want. And if we want to get it, without mentioning the phrase of course, we have to add them in order to *correct* the failure. That is why complex mentioning inverted commas may also be called *failure correcting*. As such they are actually used by Russell in the first part of paragraph D.

- e) But this mode of using inverted commas is not very appropriate for describing the situation in which the failure occurs. For the adherent of the view in question deliberately refuses to use inverted commas, let alone complex mentioning ones. But if *we* want to describe what the unsuspecting testee does, *we* have to distinguish what he wants to speak about from what he is actually speaking about. In that case *scare quotes* may be helpful. For we may say, in case of the quasi-Fregean view for example, that in speaking about “the meaning of *C*”, i.e., about the *so-called* meaning of *C*, not the desired meaning

is actually mentioned, but (if anything at all) the meaning of the denotation.

Now, although most prominently scare quotes are used to indicate what is *wrongly* described as so and so, their use may be kindly extended to what is described as so and so or what *may* be described as so and so. For the sake of brevity I shall call scare quotes used in this way *kind scare quotes* in order to distinguish them from the *unkind* ones. The essential feature of scare quotes is that they do not change the subject matter of discourse, as phrase quoting or semi-technical inverted commas do, but only the *way* it is described. They mark the change from just describing something as the so and so *towards* describing it *as described or describable* as so and so. As soon as this reflexive move is made in order to express distanced lack of consent, they become unkind. Russell uses both kind and unkind scare quotes in paragraph D. As far as I can see, other modes of using inverted commas than those enumerated are not involved in the GEA.

19.3 Application to the first part of paragraph D

In the first part of paragraph D the failure is discussed of the quasi-Fregean attempt to explain the meaning-mentioning inverted commas. The text is as follows:

The one phrase C was to have both meaning and denotation. But if we speak of “the meaning of C”, that gives us the meaning (if any) of the denotation. “The meaning of the first line of Gray’s Elegy” is the same as “The meaning of ‘The curfew tolls the knell of parting day’”, and is not the same as “The meaning of ‘the first line of Gray’s Elegy’.” Thus in order to get the meaning we want, we must speak not of “the meaning of C”, but of “the meaning of ‘C’”, which is the same as “C” by itself.

Russell’s use of inverted commas may be explained as follows: In the second sentence unkind scare quotes are used. For the meaning is wrongly described as the meaning of C. Then, in the third sentence, kind scare quotes are used. Russell wants to say: what actually is described as the meaning of the first line of Gray’s Elegy, is the same as what may also be described as the meaning of “the curfew tolls the knell of parting day”. For the first line of Gray’s Elegy = “the curfew tolls the knell of parting day”. But the meaning thus described is not the same as what should have been described as: the meaning of “the

first line of Gray's Elegy". Here the inverted commas are correcting, complex mentioning. Then, in the last sentence, what has been illustrated by a concrete example is rephrased in general terms by means of the character C. Thus, in order to get the meaning we want, we must not speak of what is wrongly described as the meaning of C, but of what ought to be described as the meaning of "C", i.e., by means of correcting complex mentioning inverted commas. And that is the same as "C", i.e., the meaning indicated by means of the inverted commas introduced in paragraph B. Here the distinction between meaning and complex appears to be relevant. For two different modes of use must be involved if we say: the meaning of "C" = "C". That is why in the previous section I have introduced bold type in saying: $M(\mathbf{C}) = \text{"C"}$.

19.4 Acrobatic feat in the second part of paragraph D

The second part of paragraph D is concerned with the failure of the quasi-Fregean view as applied to the denotation. In the previous sections I have put considerable effort in trying to explain why the denotation is relevant at all. In fact, the answer appeared to be that if the axiom of externality is adopted, both the meaning-indicating inverted commas must be explained *and their absence* in case of normal use. According to the quasi-Fregean view the connection between C and "C" is to be found in a non-linguistic mediator, called the complex. C and "C" are supposed to differ as $D(\mathbf{C})$ and $M(\mathbf{C})$.

As explained in the previous section, the failure is similar in both cases. That is why the second part of paragraph D starts with the word "similarly". Just as in speaking about $M(\mathbf{C})$ we want to get $M(\mathbf{C})$, so in speaking about $D(\mathbf{C})$ we want to get $D(\mathbf{C})$. In the first case we get (if anything at all) the meaning of the denotation of the complex instead of the meaning of the complex. In the second case we get (if anything at all) the denotation of the denotation of the complex instead of the denotation of the complex. As far as I can see, that is exactly what Russell wants to convey in the sentence beginning with "similarly". But his wording is somewhat puzzling. He says:

Similarly "the denotation of C" does not mean the denotation we want, but means something which, if it denotes at all, denotes what is denoted by the denotation we want.

The turn of phrase "does not mean the denotation we want" must be elliptical. It is to be explained as: does not mean *something*, *which denotes* the denotation we want. If that is correct, then the inverted commas occurring in this

sentence must have been used in order to speak about something which *has* meaning. In principle two candidates are available: either the phrase or the complex. In my opinion the latter is to be preferred. That is why I remain faithful to the assumption that throughout the GEA Russell does not use inverted commas in order to speak about denoting phrases.

It is true that the question how the inverted commas are to be construed in this particular case is in itself of minor importance. Both alternatives result in a correct and intelligible reading. But I prefer the second one, because it more pre-eminently reveals the ambition of the quasi-Fregean view, viz. the one expressed in the formula $C \equiv D(C)$. The proposed explanation of the normal use of a denoting phrase purports to be a paraphrase, an analysis, which reveals hidden complexity. As seen from this perspective, the failure is primarily, that the proposed paraphrase results in quite a different complexity. It provides a complex whose meaning does not even denote the same thing. If I am not mistaken, this reading is in accordance with the rather puzzling corresponding passage from OF §37, quoted in 16.1.

Now, in consideration of the nature and ambition of the view in question, it would be appropriate to discuss the proposed description of the denotation in making use of the same complex. This is what we expect Russell to do: taking some particular denoting phrase and then making an attempt to speak about both the meaning and the denotation of that phrase without mentioning it. That would be in complete accordance with paragraph C. After all, we want to consider C and " C ", not X and " C ". For the connection between a particular meaning and *its* denotation is to be preserved.

But above all, Russell wants to illustrate the twofold failure of the view in question. And he sets great store by doing it in such a way that not getting what we wanted consists in getting something *else*. That is why in case of the meaning he takes his favourite example of the first line of Gray's Elegy. For the first line of Gray's Elegy actually has a meaning. But this very same example cannot be used in order to illustrate the failure in explaining the denotation. For although the first line of Gray's Elegy has a meaning, it fails to have a denotation. After all, it is not a denoting phrase.

Russell could have looked for another example from the very start, an example that is such that the twofold application to one and the same C would in both cases result in getting something else. Such a super-favourite example would be such that instead of $M(C)$ we get $M(C)$, i.e., the meaning of C , i.e., the meaning of the denotation and instead of $D(C)$ we get $D(C)$, i.e., the denotation of C , i.e., the denotation of the denotation. In other words, in order to serve as super-favourite example, the denoting phrase C must be such

that C, the denotation of that phrase, has both meaning and denotation. As seen from the perspective of the quasi-Fregean view there are, as far as I can see, two types of examples which satisfy this requirement. Either we can take a phrase C such that it denotes a denoting phrase, or such that it denotes a complex. Both are supposed to have meaning and denotation.

But unfortunately each type has its own drawback. Firstly, Russell does not want to get involved in denoting denoting phrases. The setting of the GEA is such that mentioning denoting phrases is to be avoided. We have to take one, in order to exemplify the difference and the possible connection between C and "C". Secondly, the complex is too close to the very heart of the problem. For the difficulty to be illustrated is that we cannot get the complex. The nature of the failure would gravely be obscured if we took a denoting phrase whose denotation is exactly the kind of thing we fail to get. Therefore those promising super-favourite examples are in fact much less useful than the familiar first line of Gray's Elegy.

For the sake of systematic parity Russell could have abandoned his fondness of palpable results. But once again he evidently did not do so. He also could have altogether abandoned his desire to illustrate, as much as possible, the nature and ambition of the view in question. But evidently he did not do so. In fact he tried to find a kind of compromise. In order to guarantee that in case of the proposed translation of C the failure consists in getting something else, he takes an example different from the first line of Gray's Elegy, i.e., an example which is such that it actually has a denotation. But in order to remain in touch with the nature of the view in question, he takes something that is as close to the first example as possible, namely C = "the first line of Gray's Elegy".

In this way the situation becomes very complicated and confusing indeed. The adherent of the quasi-Fregean view is forced to perform an acrobatic feat which seems to show the nature of his view. But in fact it is primarily invented in order to show his failure palpably. Nevertheless, it shows the failure in a way that somehow resembles what he would like to do if no failure were involved at all. What he would like to do is: applying M() and D() to one and the same example. What he is forced to do is: applying M() to the first line of Gray's Elegy and D() to "the first line of Gray's Elegy". In short, the very same meaning we wanted to get in the first part of paragraph D, now acts as the denotation we want to get. The remaining part of paragraph D runs as follows:

For example, let "C" be 'the denoting complex occurring in the second of the above instances'. Then

C = "the first line of Gray's Elegy", and

The denotation of C = The curfew tolls the knell of parting day. But what we meant to have as the denotation was “the first line of Gray’s Elegy”. Thus we have failed to get what we wanted.

Here Russell starts in identifying C by means of the problematic inverted commas exemplified in paragraph B. For he says: let “C” be “the denoting complex in the second of the above instances”. What does that mean? In fact “C” is nothing else but the meaning expressed by the phrase C in its normal use. Therefore: the meaning expressed by the phrase C = the meaning of the phrase:

the denoting complex occurring in the second of the above instances.

From this it may be inferred that C, i.e., the denotation of the phrase C = the denotation of the above mentioned phrase = the denoting complex occurring in the second of the above instances = “the first line of Gray’s Elegy” = the meaning expressed by the denoting phrase occurring in the first example of paragraph B = the meaning we unsuccessfully tried to speak about in the first half of paragraph D. Now we try to get it as denotation, whereas in fact we get its denotation, i.e., the first line of Gray’s Elegy = The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.

20 Dialectics of the argument

20.1 First transition

The transition from the first to the second view, or rather from the evidence provided by the experienced failure of the first view to the second view, is expounded in paragraph E. Russell starts with a general summary of the failure illustrated in the previous paragraph. Then, in saying “This leads us to say....”, he actually makes the move to the second view:

The difficulty in speaking of the meaning of a denoting complex may be stated thus: The moment we put the complex in a proposition, the proposition is about the denotation; and if we make a proposition in which the subject is ‘the meaning of C’, then the subject is the meaning (if any) of the denotation, which was not intended. This leads us to say that, when we distinguish meaning and denotation, we must be dealing with the meaning:

the meaning has denotation and is a complex, and there is not something other than the meaning, which can be called the complex, and be said to have both meaning and denotation. The right phrase, on the view in question, is that some meanings have denotations.

The essential point in the summary of the previously exemplified failure is that the complex which we hoped to get as non-denoting, actually denotes. It refuses to occur in any other way than as deputy of its denotation. It refrains from abandoning its submissiveness, behaving like a person who cannot speak otherwise than on behalf of another, superior authority.

Now, the very reason why, according to the first view, the meaning is to be distinguished from the complex, is: the meaning is the denoting concept as actually denoting, i.e., as playing a meaning-role. The complex is supposed to be the very same denoting concept as playing an entity-role, i.e., as named and not as denoting. But in paragraph D we have learned that the complex actually denotes. It refuses to behave otherwise. *Therefore*, the reason for distinguishing meaning and complex has appeared to be invalid. The complex behaves in the same way as we expected the meaning to behave. When we distinguish meaning and denotation, i.e., “C” and C, we are not, as the quasi-Fregean view assumes, dealing with something *between* them, but with the meaning alias complex itself.

It is quite remarkable that in the first part of the text the denotation is not mentioned at all, whereas in the second part meaning and denotation are mentioned together in the phrase “when we distinguish meaning and denotation”. As far as I can see, this is due to the fact that, as explained in section 18.2, the explanation of the denotation as $C \equiv D(C)$ essentially remains the same. The change only consists in the way the meaning and the meaning indicating inverted commas are construed. But, of course both views have to do with meaning and denotation.

The inference from the first view’s flaw to the second view is not a piece of classical deductive proof. Neither in this way nor otherwise, can the validity of the second view be proved. But the inference is not, or at least not obviously dialectical in the classical sense of that word either, i.e., as a valid inference from problematic premises. For it seems to be based on what has been proved to be the case, namely that the first view fails in the way summarized by Russell. Therefore, if the inference purports to be dialectical, then a hidden, plausible but unwarranted premises must be involved. Indeed, it is based on the assumption that the difficulty can be avoided by rejecting the subtle distinction between meaning and complex. The seriousness and generality of the problem is not yet fully acknowledged. The evasive behaviour of denoting complexes is supposed to be due to their being put into a larger actually denoting complex.

Occurring in the so-called meaning of C , the complex C actually denotes just as the larger complex in which it is embedded. But the *bare* complex, devoid of all denoting additions, will abandon its submissiveness and present itself instead of its denotation. Strip the hidden addition $D()$ from C and you will get \mathbf{C} . For the formula $C \equiv D(\mathbf{C})$ is still supposed to be valid.

According to this view denoting is due to an *accidental addition*. That is why Russell conveys it in saying: "Some meanings have denotations." If you want to speak about the denotation of a meaning that happens to have one, you may do so in adding again what you have stripped from C in order to get the bare complex \mathbf{C} .

It is hardly possible to elaborate this view consistently. For if in $M(C)$ the complex C denotes in virtue of the functional addition, why not assume that in $D(C)$ it will behave in exactly the same way? If that were true, you would never be able to get the denotation of the complex. For either you would have C bare, i.e., \mathbf{C} , or $D(C)$, i.e., the denotation of the denotation of C , but never $D(\mathbf{C})$. Whether it is possible to avoid this inconsistency, I do not know. At any rate, Russell does not discuss it.

20.2 Second transition

In paragraph F another, much easier argument against the second view is put forward. In fact Russell simply reminds its adherent of what has already been said in the first part of paragraph E, namely that "the moment we put the complex in a proposition, the proposition is about the denotation". The first part of paragraph F runs as follows:

But this only makes our difficulty in speaking of meanings more evident. For suppose C is our complex; then we are to say that C is the meaning of the complex. Nevertheless, whenever C occurs without inverted commas, what is said is not true of the meaning, but only of the denotation, as when we say: The centre of mass of the solar system is a point.

The second view is to be rejected as well. It is based on a wrong diagnosis of the first view's disease. Although conceived in order to avoid the difficulty, it only makes it more evident. Assuming that the problem is due to some complication, it wants to make things more simple. But in doing so, it only gives a less complicated form to the very same failure. The lesson to be learned is: we cannot immediately name the complex at all. It cannot occur otherwise than as denoting or denoted.

Therefore, if we still want to speak about it, we have to denote it by means of another denoting complex. And in the latter complex the complex we want to speak about cannot play any role. For it will always occur as denoting. And it is impossible to denote a complex by means of its denotation. For there is no road back from denotations to meanings or complexes denoting it. This then is the transition to the third view, which may be called unmitigated mediatism. In the remaining part of paragraph F this is explained as follows:

Thus to speak of C itself, i.e., to make a proposition about the meaning, our subject must not be C, but something which denotes C. Thus "C", which is what we use when we want to speak of the meaning, must be not the meaning, but something which denotes the meaning. And C must not be a constituent of this complex (as it is of 'the meaning of C'); for if C occurs in the complex, it will be its denotation, not its meaning, that will occur, and there is no backward road from denotations to meanings, because every object can be denoted by an infinite number of different denoting phrases.

As said in section 17.1, here, between the first and the second part of paragraph F, the dividing line between the two horns of the dilemma sketched in paragraph C is to be located. Here the border is crossed, but not deliberately. For the time being, the adherent of the third view does not think about preserving or not preserving the connection between meaning and denotation. The main issue is: how to get the meaning we want. Of course we want it without mentioning the phrase. But above all, we want it in preventing meaning and denotation from being one and the same. The curious shift of reference is to be avoided. And it can successfully be avoided if we accept that denoting complexes cannot occur otherwise than as denoting. Any attempt to get C in bold type has been proved to be doomed to failure.

The principle of the dialectic is quite simple. Gradually, as we get more experienced, the theory of denoting concepts also gets increasingly thinner. What now remains is but a shadow of the quasi-Fregean view. Its failure has given rise to a loss of subtlety and mitigation, i.e., participation of the meaning as complex in the meaning by means of which it is made subject of a proposition. What remains is pure, indifferent and unmitigated mediatism. It is significant that in this part of the text, Russell does not give any concrete example. For, in fact, as will appear in the next paragraph, it is impossible to give any at all. The banana skin has been removed. Therefore nothing seems to prevent us from getting the meaning we want. But instead, we do not get anything at all!

20.3 Third transition

In the first part of paragraph G Russell gives the essential reason why the third view cannot be accepted:

Thus it would seem that “C” and C are different entities, such that “C” denotes C; but this cannot be an explanation, because the relation of “C” to C remains wholly mysterious; and where are we to find the denoting complex “C” which is to denote C?

Unmitigated mediatism is to be rejected simply because it does not succeed in preserving the connection between “C” and C. For it is not sufficient to just state that “C” denotes C. Denoting is a many-one relation. And according to the axiom of externality, the only way to preserve such a relation is: to describe the one as related to one of the many. So we have to describe C as denoted by some meaning or complex. And we cannot identify that meaning or complex by simply repeating that it denotes C. For denoting C is a property shared by many meanings or complexes. The moment we have picked out one of those many meanings, we can identify C by it. Then we are allowed to use the definite article in speaking about *the* denotation of that particular meaning. But we cannot legitimately use it in order to find a particular meaning. We are not allowed to speak about “the” meaning denoting C, unless we are able to add something to that description. And, of course, we are able to do so, in case we do not care about mentioning the phrase we started with. If we start with the phrase “the first line of Gray’s Elegy”, then, of course, we can identify one particular meaning, namely the meaning expressed by that phrase.

Russell does not mention this illegitimate way out. If he had done so, his statement in paragraph C “that the meaning cannot be got at except by means of denoting phrases” would have been much more intelligible. In fact, he assumes as a matter of course that preserving the connection means: describing meaning and denotation, not in mentioning the phrase, but in mentioning some extra-linguistic item which is capable of doing the same job. For the relation of the meaning to its denotation is “not linguistic through the phrase”.

Now, the said extra-linguistic item appeared to be the complex, i.e., the denoting concept acting as entity. It appeared to be the only possible ministering angel in preserving the connection. But that very same ministering angel also appeared to be more diabolic than we supposed. The failure of the first and the second view has been caused by the complex, or rather by the attempt to get it as C. That is where the banana skin lies. The third view seems to be viable as long as we only think of the complex’s diabolic side.

We only see it as something that is to be removed in order to prevent us from losing our footing. And then, after having successfully removed it, Russell reminds us of having eliminated the only available ministering angel as well. The two are one and the same. The banana skin itself is the only available point of application. Without it nothing happens. No movement can be made. No slip or failure can be demonstrated. And that is the very failure of the third view. It fails to show anything at all, let alone its failure. Not even an attempt to get the meaning can be made. We are left with no more than the desire to get it. That is why Russell says that in this way “the relation of ‘C’ to C remains wholly mysterious”.

As explained in section 17.3, the fourth and final view coincides with the perspective of the author of OD. The last transition is to be construed as going from a half-hearted and one-sided view of the difficulty sketched in paragraph C, to its full acknowledgement. Both horns of the dilemma are indispensable and incompatible. And just as in the third view no more than an extremely thin version of the theory of denoting concepts is left, in the fourth and final view nothing of it is left at all. This view is to be rejected. A theory that leads to such grave and fundamental difficulties must be wrong.

20.4 The disembodied Frege

Before paying attention to the last part of the text, I want to discuss a question which I have postponed deliberately: If the quasi-Fregean view gradually gets thinner and thinner in the course of the GEA’s dialectic, how much quasi-Fregeanism remains? My answer to this question is very unorthodox indeed. It constitutes the counterpart of the rather unorthodox starting point, expounded in the previous chapter. That the quasi-Fregean view gradually gets thinner in fact only means that it loses its typical Russellian embodiment. Firstly the subtle distinction between the denoting concept as meaning and the denoting concept as entity is abandoned. Secondly the very possibility of the denoting concept’s occurring as entity is abandoned together with participation. Both points are typically Russellian and un-Fregean. However, what remains in the third view is exactly what Russell once adopted from Frege. It is the “important principle” mentioned in the margin of OF p.363, quoted in 11.2. A meaning or sense can only become subject of a proposition by means of another meaning or sense pointing to it. In other words, the so-called complex, which appeared to constitute both the banana skin and the ministering angel, is not at home in the world of Frege’s logic at all. Therefore, paragraph D and E can hardly be applied to his theory of sense and reference. The application only becomes

possible when the Russellian body of the quasi-Fregean view has disappeared. Then we meet the disembodied Frege.

This spectral being, although purely Fregean, is of course not to be confused with the real Frege. It represents an isolated aspect of the theory of sense and reference, which is at home in another, quite un-Russellian body. Nevertheless it is such that it could be incorporated in, and mitigated by, Russell's theory of denoting concepts. For in fact the quasi-Fregean view is just an ingenious mix of the two elements introduced in 9 and 10, the innocent, purely Russellian view put forward in POM §56, and the Fregean principle, mentioned in POM §476, that a sense can only become the subject of a proposition by means of another sense.

Now, at first, Frege's answer to the question how a sense becomes subject of a proposition seems to be very close to Russell's quasi-Fregean view. What is more, Frege's theory of direct and indirect sense and reference might be called quasi-Russellian! For the only way of justifying Frege's use of the phrase "*the indirect sense*", is a quasi-Russellian one. An attempt to explain the definite article could be made by saying that the indirect sense differs from all other senses having the same reference in *containing the direct sense as non-referring*. Such an answer presupposes the possibility of different kinds of *occurrences*. I do not want to say that Frege actually ever accepted different kinds of occurrences, but that he would be forced to make use of them if he were pressed to explain further the notion of indirect sense and if he were prepared to defend it at all. But in fact, not accepting different kinds of occurrences is so much of essential importance to the body of his logic that Frege would prefer rejecting the notion of indirect sense altogether.

These considerations inevitably lead to the conclusion, that it is impossible to apply the GEA as a *whole* to Frege's theory of sense and reference. But there is no need to do so. For *part* of the GEA actually can be applied to it, namely the part beginning halfway through paragraph F. There is no need to convince Frege of the impossibility of catching the complex itself. He would never be prepared to participate in such a hunt. From the very outset he would wholeheartedly accept the principle of the third view, namely that meanings or senses cannot occur otherwise than as referring. Indeed, as seen from Russell's perspective, which is also the perspective of the GEA as a whole, it is very hard to accept the said principle. For Russell had to reject the most vital parts of the body of his own theory in order to reach that conclusion. Only a very severe lesson of unlooked-for experience could force him to embrace the Fregean principle. Only there, at the border of the essential dilemma, Frege's ghost appears on his way.

In the first part of paragraph G, the passage quoted and discussed in the

previous subsection, Russell starts his criticism of the third view. No doubt, it is meant to be self-criticism. But it is equally meant as criticism of Frege. If so, how to assess the validity of this two-fold criticism? In my opinion the latter part is stronger than the former!¹¹⁵ For the Russell of the beloved theory of denoting concepts could possibly reject the criticism in making an appeal to a new kind of occurrence. After all, in the part of OF preceding the crucial passage, he shows a considerable readiness to accept a great variety of occurrences. Without clearly distinguishing occurrence as role from occurrence as position, he starts to accept, on occasion of the discovery made in the crucial passage, that roles are to be reduced to positions. The axiom of externality forces him to do so (see 15.2). Therefore, Russell is moving towards a fuller acceptance of the said axiom. That is why he could also have chosen to challenge its validity.

As will be explained below (22.3), in Frege's logic the axiom of externality plays a much more prominent and stable role: Any appeal to ambiguity is out of the question. Logic itself does not have anything to do with it. Something like ambiguously referring or denoting phrases is completely un-Fregean. This means that Frege simply has no choice. He must accept the demand explained in paragraph C. The fact that one and the same phrase can either be used in direct speech in order to express a certain sense or in indirect speech in order to indicate that sense, cannot be supposed to reveal a logical ambiguity or two-sidedness. The linguistic ambiguity is to be unambiguously explained. Now, the first part of Russell's criticism simply is that Frege is not able to preserve the connection. Where to find "the" so-called indirect sense? Frege's use of the definite article does not reveal anything more than a personal desire.

In *On Sense and Reference*, he is so much concerned with proving the universal validity of the principle of substitution, which in fact is but a specific appearance of the axiom of externality, that he limits himself to an anxious warning to the reader of the ambiguity involved in direct and indirect speech. Bewitched that by that ambiguity we might be seduced into believing in the existence of real exceptions. But in this connection Frege just forgets to do what according to his own principles he ought to have done: unambiguously

115 I use an exclamation mark, because, as far as I can see, all commentators who have taken notice of the differences between Russell and Frege, have assumed that the GEA, as applied to Frege *cannot have more cogency* than as applied to Russell. This assumption is based on another one, namely that if the GEA is applicable to Frege at all, the argument *as a whole* must be applicable to his theory. Eventually this belief is based on the tenet of Russell's supposed loneliness (see 8.4). Frege is deemed to be an *external* opponent, who only appeared on the scene the moment Russell felt the need to justify and defend the previously conceived and *fully adopted* ToD. I want to challenge all these assumptions.

explaining this ambiguity. In the GEA Russell suggests that the only possible option that Frege could provide is no explanation at all. For it only consists in the statement that the two-fold use of the *same* expression is completely accidental.

20.5 Frege in the “inextricable tangle”

In the remaining part of the text, the link with the puzzle of George IV’s curiosity is explained. This move is not surprising. For the GEA is part of OD on account of the role it has to play in it. The GEA as a whole purports to do with regard to puzzle (1) exactly the same as what the KFA purports to do with respect to puzzle (3): proving that the old theory of denoting is unable to solve it.

Although in itself this consideration is right, it might lead us astray. For we might suppose it to be sufficient to predict what the argument will be like. We expect Russell to proceed as follows: “It has been proved impossible to speak about the meaning otherwise than by mentioning the phrase. But within the perspective of the theory of meaning and denotation, puzzle (1) can only be solved if it is possible to speak about the meaning otherwise than by mentioning the phrase. That is why Frege makes an appeal to the indirect sense. Such an appeal is doomed to failure. Therefore, the theory of meaning and denotation or sense and reference is not able to solve puzzle (1).”¹¹⁶

The very first word of the remaining part of the text, the word “moreover”, is sufficient to prove that Russell actually proceeds differently. He wants to confront both Frege and himself as possible adherent of the theory of unmitigated mediatism with an *extra* difficulty. Even if it were possible to find “the” indirect sense, that would not be sufficient to solve puzzle (1)! For according to Russell, the difficulty concerning the curiosity of George IV is that a denoting phrase in its *normal* use may nevertheless occur in such a way that its meaning is relevant. In other words: there are two different reasons why Russell is not prepared to accept Frege’s approach to cases which seem at variance with the principle of substitution. Firstly, the indirect sense cannot be found and secondly, at least in some of such unruly cases, something else must be found, not a supposed occurrence of “C”, but an occurrence of C in which nevertheless the meaning is relevant.

116 Cf. 10.3.

Let us look at the text, before discussing the nature of this twofold criticism. It runs as follows:

Moreover, when *C* occurs in a proposition, it is not *only* the denotation that occurs (as we will see in the next paragraph); yet, on the view in question, *C* is only the denotation, the meaning being wholly relegated to “*C*”. This is an inextricable tangle, and seems to prove that the whole distinction of meaning and denotation has been wrongly conceived.

(H) That the meaning is relevant when a denoting phrase occurs in a proposition is formally proved by the puzzle about the author of *Waverley*. The proposition “Scott was the author of *Waverley*” has a property not possessed by “Scott was Scott”, namely the property that George IV wished to know whether it was true. Thus the two are not identical propositions; hence the meaning of “the author of *Waverley*” must be relevant as well as the denotation, if we adhere to the point of view to which this distinction belongs. Yet, as we have just seen, so long as we adhere to this point of view, we are compelled to hold that only the denotation can be relevant. Thus the point of view in question must be abandoned.

This concluding part of the GEA reinforces the criticism of the third view. Its twofoldness must correspond with a supposed twofold failure of the third view. As noted in the first part of paragraph G (see 19.3), its first failure is that the inverted commas are not explained. “The relation of “*C*” to *C* remains wholly mysterious.” And “*C*” cannot be identified at all. The second failure is that refraining from any appeal to the complex *C* inevitably leads to the conclusion that the only possible way in which the meaning could be relevant to a proposition, is: by occurring in it *as denoted*. For if “*C*” and *C* do not have anything in common, if the twofold use of one and the same phrase does not reveal anything of logical importance at all, if it is to be construed as a case of mere misleading and logically irrelevant equivocation, then neither the meaning itself nor a part of it is present in *C*. As soon as *C* occurs, the proposition is only about the denotation. The meaning does not play any role in what it is about. If the meaning is of any importance to what the proposition is about, it must be about the meaning, i.e., the meaning must be denoted. In that case not *C* occurs, but something else, namely “*C*”. Indeed, the use of the same character suggests a connection, but in fact there is none. It would have been better to speak about *B* instead of “*C*”. This is what Russell means in saying that the meaning is “wholly relegated to “*C*” ”.

Why is Russell of opinion that the curiosity of George IV cannot be

explained unless the meaning of the phrase “the author of *Waverley*” cannot be entirely reduced to its being denoted by another meaning and another phrase? Because according to him, puzzle (1) requires that the proposition that Scott is the same as the author of *Waverley* and the proposition that Scott is the same as Scott do not only differ in meaning, but also in what they are *about*. After all, George IV did not want to know anything about meanings. He wanted to know about Scott and about the author of *Waverley* whether they are the same. And he did not want to know about Scott and about Scott whether they are the same. Therefore, it is not sufficient to point out, as Frege no doubt would have done, that the two propositions differ in meaning or sense. Their difference in meaning must bear on what they are about. But neither Frege, nor any other adherent of unmitigated mediatism, is able to meet this requirement.

Frege would point out that although the proposition or ‘thought’ expressed by the sentence “George IV wanted to know whether Scott was the same as the author of *Waverley*” actually is about George IV, it only *seems* to be about Scott and the author of *Waverley*. According to him, this proposition actually is about the direct sense expressed by the proper name “Scott” in its normal use and about the direct sense expressed by “the author of *Waverley*”. That is why in this case the identity of reference, required for any legitimate application of the principle of substitution, fails.¹¹⁷

According to Russell, however, this explanation is too artificial. It cannot be accepted, because George IV wanted to know something about Scott himself, not about the sense expressed by his name. Therefore, even if Frege were capable of identifying the so-called indirect sense, that would not be sufficient to solve puzzle (1) adequately. For in OD that puzzle is deliberately put in such a form that George IV wanted to judge the very same ‘judgeable content’, which according to Frege would justify the application of the principle of substitution, if it were true. Therefore, as an unmitigated mediastist and in spite of his having introduced the notion of indirect sense, Frege is forced to conclude something that evidently is *not* true, namely that George IV wished to know whether Scott is the same as Scott. Even if he were able to identify the indirect sense, he would be forced to this conclusion.

The phrase “inextricable tangle”, used in the last sentence of paragraph G, is to be taken for what it is. It is used in order to highlight the very climax of the GEA. It indicates a kind of double bind or redoubled predicament resulting from the double-edged sword of Russell’s criticism of the third view. As seen from his own perspective, this third view is nothing more than the last

117 This has been explained in 0.3.

convulsion of his former theory of denoting concepts. It does not deserve to be adopted; for unmitigated mediatism cannot stand up to the light of day. It cannot consciously be embraced or consistently elaborated at all. To Russell, who in paragraph D, E, and the first part of F, has demonstrated the fiasco of his own former mitigated mediatism, this is evident anyhow.

But to Frege this is not yet evident at all. For Frege actually adopted unmitigated mediatism. And the only possible way of adopting it is: in confusion. That is why Russell's criticism of Frege's unmitigated mediatism is similar to Frege's criticism of psychologism. For according to Frege, psychologism can only be adopted in confusion.¹¹⁸ In fact the nature of Frege's view is concealed by the quasi-Russellian notion of indirect sense. For it suggests something like participation. It suggests that among all the senses referring to one and the same sense *S*, one is more intimately knit with *S* than all the others.¹¹⁹ Its prerogative seems to be, that it somehow contains *S*. And if it contains *S*, it must contain it as non-referring, i.e., not as *S*, but as **S**. But Frege is silent about such a possible further elaboration of his view. That is why he seems not to be plagued by banana skins.

Russell mercilessly points out that Frege's theory is not Fregean enough. It contains a vague, half-hearted and rudimentary appeal to different occurrences. If these are eliminated – and they are to be eliminated on account of the axiom of externality – then the so-called indirect sense cannot be identified. And the underlying reason why it cannot be identified is equally the reason why, even if it could be identified, puzzle (1) cannot be solved. For it requires that the direct sense is relevant to the direct referent. This then is the inextricable tangle, the redoubled predicament, which primarily and pre-eminently regards Frege.

The phrase "inextricable tangle" has played on the imagination of a lot of commentators.¹²⁰ It has become customary to join it with the definite article in order to indicate the problem Russell discovered in OF. This use of the phrase is not warranted. For *as such* the inextricable tangle does not occur in OF at all. Of course, the problem of which the inextricable tangle is a pointed version actually occurs in OF.¹²¹ Evidently, the just-mentioned commentators have unconsciously made use of the axiom of externality. For according to it, one and the same thing cannot assume different forms. If what occurs in different contexts is one and the same, then the difference between these contexts is irrelevant. And if the difference between them were relevant, then what occurs in one of them would be something different from what occurs in the other.

118 See Frege (1893), pp. XVIII-XIX.

119 See below 25.2.

120 See e.g. Rodriguez-Consuegra (1993) and Noonan (1996).

121 Namely after the conception of the ToD. See 21.2.

Chapter V

Russell and the Fundamental Frege

21 From the ToD's conception to its predicament

21.1 The conception of the ToD

Having extensively explained the pivotal part played by the Frege of indirect sense in both the GEA's genesis and its final conclusion, I shall now, in this final chapter, discuss the rather ambiguous role of the fundamental Frege. In order to do so I return from the GEA, i.e., from the passage in OD corresponding to OF §§ 35-39, to OF itself. I shall start, in this subsection, with an attempt to explain OF §40, where the ToD is actually conceived on occasion of the problem discussed in §§35-39.¹²² There, in OF §40, the fundamental Frege is not yet visible on the scene. Nevertheless, he is inconspicuously present, acting from the prompt-box. The text runs as follows:

It might be supposed that the whole matter could be simplified by introducing a relation of denoting: instead of all the complications about "C" and C, we might try to put "x denotes y". But we want to be able to speak of what x denotes, and unfortunately "what x denotes" is a denoting complex. We might avoid this as follows: Let C be an unambiguously denoting complex (we may now drop the inverted commas); then we have

$(\exists y): C \text{ denotes } y: C \text{ denotes } z. \supset_z . z = y.$

Then what is commonly expressed by Φ 'C' will be replaced by

$(\exists): C \text{ denotes } y: C \text{ denotes } z. \supset_z . z = y : \Phi'y$

At first sight the move made by Russell is very surprising. How could "the matter be simplified by introducing a relation of denoting"? For "the complications about 'C' and C" are concerned with the very relation of

122 Cf. Makin (1996).

denoting. According to the first sentence of the GEA, it is “the relation of the meaning to the denotation” that “involves certain rather curious difficulties”. But the attempt made by Russell in the above-quoted passage does not consist in reconsidering the fact that “C” denotes C, but in introducing denoting as a relation between two different entities: x denotes y . What is more, he introduces the variables x and y in order to avoid denoting complexes (indicated by the character C). The formula “ x denotes y ” is quite different from the formula “B denotes C” which I have used in 20.5 in order to summarize the third view discussed in the GEA. Of course, Russell does not want to adopt this view. The character C is used in such a way that it can be substituted by any concrete example whatever of a definitely denoting phrase in its normal use. The variables x and y are introduced in order to be used in a different way: such that they cannot be substituted by a constant. This pre-eminently happens, when they act as variables bound by quantifiers.

The aim of Russell’s introducing a relation of denoting is to get rid of complexes silently denoting in a direction perpendicular to the propositions in which they occur. The implicit relation is to be made explicit. It is to be turned ninety degrees. Instead of being presupposed, it is to be stated. And it is to be stated in such a way, that the complications about “C” and C are avoided. But in order to avoid them, it is not sufficient to explicitly state the relation of denoting. For we do not only want to speak about the relation but also about its object y . And if we speak about what x denotes, then we re-introduce a denoting complex.

But *this* difficulty may be avoided. Quantifiers and bound variables can be used in order to state that a definitely denoting concept actually denotes something. For if we want to attribute a predicate Φ to what is denoted, we can *repeat* the variable y . For we may say: there is one and only one y such that x denotes y and y has the property Φ .

But what about x ? It does not occur as a bound variable. What is more, in fact x is to be replaced by “C”. Therefore, the puzzling inverted commas are still there. At this moment, the fundamental Frege, concealed in his prompt-box, whispers an important message: “*One and only one* is a second-order property. By means of quantifiers and bound variables it can be attributed to first-order properties or concepts. This procedure does not have anything to do with denoting, let alone with inverted commas. See *Foundations of Arithmetic*, §78, point 4”. As seen from Russell’s perspective, this hint may be assimilated as follows. Frege uses the notion of concept in a different way. But nearest to what he calls concepts or properties are what in POM are called propositional functions. And these may just as well be derived from a simple proposition containing a predicate such as ‘human’ as from a proposition containing a class

concept such as ‘man’. Now, according to POM §57 all denoting concepts are derived from class-concepts. Therefore to each unambiguously denoting concept corresponds a propositional function. It may be obtained by dropping the definite article and replacing it by “y is-a”. From the denoting concept “the so and so”, we get the propositional function “y is-a so and so”. The latter inverted commas may be dropped the moment the variable y is bound by quantifiers. For then the constant part of the propositional function occurs as meaning.

The usual way of explaining the ToD is as follows. Sentences containing unambiguously denoting phrases, especially sentences of the form “The S is P”, express propositions whose logical structure is different from the one suggested by natural language. The real logical structure may be revealed by means of paraphrase. “The S is P” is to be translated into: One and only one entity is S and it is P. Or more formally: $\exists y[S(y) \wedge \forall z(S(z) \rightarrow z=y) \wedge P(y)]$

This explanation does not reveal the actual genesis of the ToD. In the above-quoted passage from OF, its genesis is actually contained. But it is not at all easy to understand it. Its most intriguing and dialectical feature is that the problematic relation of denoting and the puzzling inverted commas are *integrated* into the proposition *in order to get rid of them*. This may be illustrated by introducing intermediate steps between “The S is P” and its final translation.

If we say “The S is P”, then, according to the theory of denoting concepts, we presuppose something which is not stated, namely that “the S” denotes the S. In the GEA the attempt is discussed to state this and to explain the difference and the connection between “the S” and the S. From the failure of this attempt we might conclude that it is preferable to remain silent about the drawback of the proposition. But Russell’s strategy is directly opposed to this option. He wants to put the proposition’s dark side in the limelight. Following this procedure without any qualification, we get:

- (a) “The S” denotes the S and it is P

Evidently this paraphrase is unhelpful. But it may be transformed. Instead of the full problematic side of the proposition, we only assimilate its homeopathic dilution, namely that “the S” denotes *something*. The essence of this procedure is, that unambiguously denoting is *ambiguously* stated. In this way we get:

- (b) “The S” unambiguously denotes something and it is P

Now, as soon as we realize that “the S” denotes something if and only if one and only one entity is an S, both the inverted commas and the relation of denoting can be eliminated. In this way we get the final paraphrase.

21.2 The ToD as challenging denoting

As seen from the perspective of its actual genesis, the ToD is essentially the possible successor of the theory of denoting concepts. It challenges the validity of the latter theory. This challenge may be extended by a criticism of Frege’s theory of sense and reference. As such the new theory has been put forward in an article on *denoting*.

According to the GEA, paragraph G, “the whole distinction of meaning and denotation has been wrongly conceived”. It has been conceived in such a way, that the meaning of a denoting phrase is not relevant to what the proposition is about. In which way does the ToD correct for this failure? By assuming “that denoting phrases never have any meaning in themselves, but that every proposition in whose verbal expression they occur has a meaning.” (OD, paragraph 4). In fact this statement is rather confusing. For it sounds like *degrading* the meaning, whereas according to the GEA, its *upgrading* is required. Somehow the meaning’s excessive submissiveness has to disappear.

This difficulty may be explained as follows. The submissiveness of the meaning is based on cooperation. In the theory of denoting concepts the different parts of the meaning, that expressed by “the” and that expressed by “so and so”, are supposed to constitute one complex whole, which denotes the denotation. And as such, i.e., as denoting *together* the parts submit themselves to the denotation. Therefore, if a denoting phrase is not any more supposed to have one unitary meaning, the unwanted altruism of the meaning has disappeared. The remaining parts each live their own life without being denoting. *They* do have meaning in themselves. So, in fact only the marriage between “the” and “so and so” is exposed as mere appearance, not the parties engaged in it. The statement that denoting phrases do not have any meaning in themselves amounts to the same as the statement that all meanings are non-denoting. Therefore, what seems to be a degradation of the meaning is in fact the emancipation of its remaining parts.

The source of the difficulty is that according to the ToD, an emancipation of a *denoting* meaning is impossible. The GEA suggests that the relation of the meaning to the denotation is to be conceived in a different way. On that account, we expect the very same meaning to be upgraded as denoting. But according to the axiom of external difference, that is impossible. What the

ToD proposes is: disappearance of denoting, i.e., of denoting meanings and emancipation of something else, namely their remaining parts.

In fact the ToD is more radical than Russell makes us believe. For in OD he generally uses the expression “denoting phrase” without scare quotes.¹²³ But if denoting meanings are to disappear according to the ToD, then the very reason for calling a phrase denoting disappears as well. For it only deserves to be called denoting on account of its expressing a denoting meaning. If it only seems to express such a meaning, it only seems to be denoting. On that account it might be called a “denoting phrase”.

Upgrading the remaining parts of the meaning by breaking their submissive union corresponds to degrading the denotation. This, of course, does not imply that what seemed to be denoted has to disappear, but only that its being denoted is supposed to be mere appearance. On that account it may be called “denotation”, i.e., the so-called denotation.

Consequently a proposition in whose verbal expression an unambiguously “denoting phrase” occurs, may by *accident* be about the “denotation” of that phrase. But it can never be about the “denotation” *in virtue* of its being expressed by a sentence containing the denoting phrase. The proposition expressed by “The author of *Waverley* is the same as Scott” is actually about Scott, because he is named by name. But it only seems to be about the so-called author of *Waverley*. It seems to tell us that someone in particular is the same as Scott, whereas in fact it tells us that one and only one entity wrote *Waverley* and that *it* is the same as Scott. The property of being the same as Scott is not attributed to anyone in particular. That is why the proposition expressed by “Scott is the same as Scott” differs significantly from the proposition expressed by “The author of *Waverley* is the same as Scott”. They differ in what they are about. For in the former Scott occurs twice, whereas in the latter he only occurs once.

These considerations yield a twofold result. In the first place they show how the ToD proposes to escape from the inextricable tangle. In this way it throws a fresh light on George IV’s curiosity. That is the other, positive side of the link

123 Except in OD’s very first sentence where so-called denoting phrases are introduced. For quite other reasons, that sentence will be explained in 22.1.

with puzzle (1). It actually occurs in OF §40. For immediately after the above-quoted passage Russell says:

Thus e.g. Φ ‘(the author of *Waverley*) becomes
 $(\exists y)$: “the author of *Waverley*” denotes y : “the author of *Waverley*” denotes
 $z. \supset_z z=y$: Φ ‘ y
 Thus “Scott is the author of *Waverley*” becomes
 $(\exists y)$: “the author of *Waverley*” denotes y : “the author of *Waverley*” denotes
 $z. \supset_z z=y$: Scott= y
 This, then, was what surprised people as well as it might.

In the second place the question as to which modest role is left to the “denotation” can now be answered (see also OD paragraph 28). It does not act anymore as something the proposition is about, unless it happens to be mentioned by name. It actually plays the role of a truth-maker. If a proposition of the form *the S is P* is true, then there must be one particular entity d such that the S is the same as d and $P(d)$. In order to understand the proposition that the S is P , you need not be acquainted with the so-called denotation unless it happens to be part of the predicate P . But if you investigate whether the proposition is true, you may meet d and mention it by name.

21.3 The ToD as challenged by denoting

The previous account of the ToD as challenging denoting is essentially incomplete. One crucial question has been ignored, namely: what is a proposition expressed by a sentence of the form “the S is P ” actually about? If it is not, or at least not essentially, about what seems to be denoted by “the S ”, it must be about something else; maybe not about something else in particular, but at any rate about something or other. For as far as I can see, the ToD cannot be construed as challenging being about in general. This notion was and remains of utmost importance to Russell’s logic. The possible elimination of denoting only implies that a particular mode of being about is abandoned, not being about in general. What is supposed to occur as being denoted by a denoting concept occurs as something the proposition is about. But if a proposition is about something, it need not per force occur as denoted.

The title of OD is problematic, because it contains a new theory that purports to challenge the very notion of denoting. But another title, say, “On being about” or “On being on”, would probably have been more appropriate. For the very quintessence of the ToD is: propositions expressed by certain

sentences differ in *what they are about* from what those sentences suggest. Therefore it is quite remarkable that in OD itself this issue is hardly discussed. What is more, in OF it is discussed, although in a somewhat different way.

As has been noted in 2.6 and 7.1, it is impossible to understand the context of discovery of the ToD, unless one important difference between OF and OD is taken into account. In OF the problem concerning the explanation of inverted commas is general. Both unambiguously and ambiguously denoting concepts are concerned. As applied to the latter, the difficulty may be put in the form of an argument. The GEA is such an argument. But the example discussed in the crucial §35 of OF, namely “any man”, could equally well give rise to an argument. Let us, for the sake of brevity, call it the *Any Man Argument* or AMA.

As seen from the perspective of the theory of denoting concepts, the difference between these two versions of one and the same basic problem is immaterial. That is why in OF§38 Russell harmlessly moves from the discussion of C versus “C” in general to an example. And the example happens to be an unambiguously denoting concept, namely “the centre of mass of the Solar System”. Then, after having made this shift, the ToD is conceived as a successful attempt to avoid by means of quantifiers and bound variables the problematic inverted commas in case of unambiguously “denoting phrases”.

But then the difference between the GEA and the AMA suddenly gets additional importance. For according to the theory of denoting concepts, which is above all a theory of ambiguously denoting concepts, the variable is to be explained by means of denoting. It is to be construed as *any entity*. This point requires an explanation. In the next section I shall discuss its quite un-Fregean background. Here I only want to sketch the way in which the viability of the ToD is jeopardized by the AMA or rather the AEA, i.e., the *Any Entity Argument*. It remains in jeopardy, as long as Russell holds on to the explanation of the variable by means of the denoting concept “any entity”.

If the problem discovered in OF §35 were confined to unambiguously denoting concepts, a conservative version of the ToD would be acceptable. In that case it could be construed as providing a reduction of different kinds of denoting to one irreducible form of ambiguously denoting, the one expressed by “any”. What is said in the previous subsection, namely that all meanings are non-denoting, would only be applied to “the”, “some”, “a”, “all” and “every”, but not to “any”, or at least not to “any entity”. But in fact the problem discovered in OF §35 is not confined to unambiguously denoting concepts. As AEA it forces Russell to reject the conservative version of the ToD. In OF §44, about two pages after the ToD’s conception, Russell actually concludes that “it

is better to find some other theory”.

But that is not the end of the story. In OF §47, p.387 Russell realizes that a different view of the variable is needed in order to save the ToD:

The interesting and curious point is that, by driving *denoting* back and back as we have been doing, we get it all reduced to the one notion of *any*, from which I started at first. This one notion seems to be presupposed always, and to involve in itself all the difficulties on account of which we have rejected other denoting concepts. Thus we are left with the task of concocting *de novo* a tenable theory of *any*, in which denoting is not used. The interesting point which we have elicited above is that *any* is genuinely more fundamental than other denoting concepts; they can be explained by it, but not it by them. And *any* itself is not fundamental in general, but only in the shape of *anything*.

In other words: the AEA forces Russell to either reject the ToD or to elaborate it in such a way that the variable is taken as more fundamental than denoting. This marks indeed the essential turning point in OF: from denoting as more fundamental than the variable towards an attempt to take the variable as more fundamental than denoting. I deliberately use the word “attempt”; for viewed from Russell’s perspective, taking the variable as fundamental and irreducible is by far not as easy as might be supposed.

At this juncture the fundamental Frege is invited to leave his prompt box and to appear on the scene. I call him “fundamental”, because his possible assistance is based on what *precedes* the distinction between sense and reference. He is consulted on account of his view of the variable. The question is not whether he might be prepared to accept the theory of definite descriptions, but rather whether he could help in fashioning Russell’s theory of indefinite descriptions.

In order to understand the role Frege is allowed to play in this connection, it is quite important to distinguish the view actually considered and maybe, adopted by Russell, from the view Frege himself would have put forward. This distinction is not made in OF. Nevertheless, it must be made in order to adequately describe what happens. Russell actually chooses a rather precarious compromise between the conservative and the Fregean version of the ToD. According to the former, the variable has meaning in itself and in virtue of it ambiguously denotes any entity. According to Frege the variable neither has any meaning in itself, nor is it denoting. Russell’s compromise

consists in assuming that the variable does not have any meaning in itself, but nevertheless ambiguously denotes. In other words, something like a shadow of denoting, namely *denoting without meaning*, is retained.

Before discussing the nature of this rather hybrid way of taking the variable as fundamental (see section 24.1), I shall first pay attention to the differences between Russell and Frege (22) and then to Russell's misconceptions about them (23).

22 Fundamental difference and unsuspected similarity

22.1 The un-Fregean background of OD's first sentence

The very first sentence of OD is not only longer, but also much more puzzling, than the first line of Gray's Elegy. It runs as follows:

By a "denoting phrase" I mean a phrase such as anyone of the following: a man, some man, any man, every man, all men, the present King of England, the present King of France, the centre of mass of the solar system at the first instant of the twentieth century, the revolution of the earth round the sun, the revolution of the sun round the earth.

The words "such as" leave room for further examples. But the examples Russell has in mind only bears on the choice of "so and so". He does not want the reader to think of similar phrases such as "few men", "most men" or "each man". According to his former theory, there are five and only five irreducible kinds of ambiguously denoting concepts. They are marked by the words *a*, *some*, *any*, *every* and *all*.

In OD the number of kinds is reduced. For in paragraph 6, both the difference between *a* and *some* and the difference between *every* and *all* is supposed to be merely verbal. But nothing is said about *any*. This remarkable silence must in my opinion be due to the role it used to play in the explanation of the variable. Indeed, in paragraph 4, Russell boldly states that he takes "the notion of the variable as fundamental". But this statement may be construed in different ways. According to the conservative version of the ToD, one and only one denoting concept remains, namely the variable "any entity". In the previous section I have explained why in OF this version of the ToD is rejected: it is threatened by the AEA. But in OD the AEA is not mentioned. Therefore, in no way does Russell prevent the reader of OD from supposing him to adopt the conservative version of the ToD. This, I think, is in itself

sufficient to prove that the emergency assistance rendered by the fundamental Frege (to be discussed in 24.1) did not result in an unproblematic solution.

The above-mentioned five-fold classification belongs to the theory of denoting concepts.¹²⁴ But it is derived from a classification preceding that theory. For, as said in 13.2, denoting concepts are supposed to replace enumerations. According to Russell, there are five and only five kinds of enumeration. And, however important denoting concepts are supposed to be, they do not require any new classification. The form of an ambiguously denoting concept corresponds to the form of enumeration it is supposed to replace.

Russell's classification of enumerations or "combinations" is based on the following two main principles. Firstly, it may either be a conjunction or a disjunction. Secondly, both may or may not be equivalent to a conjunction or disjunction of singular propositions. At first view this procedure results in four kinds of enumeration, namely:

- 1) "a and b are P" is equivalent to "a is P and b is P".
- 2) "a and b are P" is not equivalent to "a is P and b is P".
- 3) "a or b is P" is equivalent to "a is P or b is P".
- 4) "a or b is P" is not equivalent to "a is P or b is P".

The combination occurring in case 1) is called *propositional conjunction*. Russell's example in POM §59, p.56 is: "Brown and Jones are paying court to miss Smith." This conjunction is called propositional, because it is equivalent to a conjunction of singular propositions, not because it is identical with it. In POM Russell repeatedly emphasizes that different propositions may be equivalent and that therefore equivalence is not sufficient for proving them to be identical.¹²⁵ In OD this un-Fregean principle is less pre-eminent.¹²⁶ At any rate, if a propositional conjunction is replaced by a denoting concept, then the specific way it ambiguously denotes, will be indicated by the word *every*.

Conjunctions of the second type are called *numerical*. The rather un-Fregean example is: "Brown and Jones are two of Miss Smith's suitors." *All* indicates the corresponding form of ambiguously denoting concepts.

124 See also Dau (1986).

125 See e.g. POM §48, p.45, where it is applied to "Socrates is human" and "Humanity belongs to Socrates". See also POM §219, pp.228-220, where it is applied to propositions like "5>3" and "3<5".

126 That it is less pre-eminent in OD is evident e.g., from paragraph 6. That it is still there, appears from paragraph 32, footnote.

Numerical propositions are of utmost importance to the genesis of Russell's realism. Because they are not equivalent to, let alone identical with, a conjunction of singular propositions, they are pre-eminently suitable for disproving the logic and metaphysics of substance. If eventually, "in the last analysis", whatever is true can be reduced to singular subject-predicate propositions, then there cannot be real plurality! For only *together* many individuals become many.¹²⁷

Disjunctions are treated in the same way. However, Russell's terminology is somewhat puzzling. In case 3) we expect him to speak about "propositional disjunction", but actually he calls it "*constant disjunction*". The reason behind this terminology will become intelligible as soon as the remaining cases are discussed. Be this as it is, the example is: "Miss Smith will marry Brown or Jones." The corresponding denoting concept will be prefixed by *some*.

The disjunction, which is not equivalent to a disjunction of singular propositions is illustrated by: "If it was one of Miss Smith's suitors, it must have been Brown or Jones". From this proposition it can neither be inferred that it must have been Brown, nor that it must have been Jones. Just as "two" can neither be truly predicated of Brown, or of Jones, so the necessity indicated by "must" only regards one of *the two*, but not one *in particular*. That is why Russell calls it *variable disjunction*. The corresponding denoting concept is prefixed by *a*.

If the *variable* disjunction is called "variable" because the predicate is not true of some one in particular, than it is quite reasonable to speak about a "*constant* conjunction" because the predicate is true of some one in particular although we may as yet not know which one.

At first view, the above-sketched four-fold division seems to be exhaustive. Indeed it is, if we assume as a matter of course that a conjunction of terms is only to be compared with a conjunction of propositions and a disjunction of terms with a disjunction of properties. But an oblique equivalence may also be taken into account. In principle this could give rise to two additional cases. However, Russell only considers one of them, namely a disjunction of terms being equivalent to a conjunction of singular propositions.

Schematically: (5) "a or b is P" is equivalent to "a is P and b is P".

The corresponding example is: "If it was Brown or Jones you met, it was a very ardent lover". This mode of combination is called *variable conjunction*. As it is,

127 See Russell (1900), §10, p.12.

as Russell says¹²⁸, “half way between a conjunction and a disjunction”, it could equally well have been called a disjunction, say a “general disjunction”. It is also halfway between the regular equivalence of (1) and (3) and the regular non-equivalence of (2) and (4). Therefore (5) may be put in the middle of the square marked by (1), (2), (3) and (4). Variable conjunction may be expressed in saying: *it does not matter which one you choose*. That is why the corresponding denoting concept is prefixed by *any*. The variable may be substituted by whatever constant you wish.

Any, when combined with the unrestricted notion of *entity* or *term* is supposed to explain the variable. Any entity whatever is such, that something is true or false about it. But however important the denoting concept “any entity” may be, the class-concept “entity” may occur otherwise, say as a predicate, and the specific form of ambiguously denoting indicated by “any” may be derived from another class-concept. In this connection the principle that equivalent propositions may be different, is of essential importance. Let us compare the following three propositions:

- (a) Every man is mortal
- (b) Any man is mortal
- (c) $\forall x (x \text{ is a man} \rightarrow x \text{ is mortal})$

According to the theory of denoting concepts, these three propositions are equivalent. They imply each other. Nevertheless, they are different, because they are not *about* the same combination of entities. In propositions (a) and (b), the same material is involved, but it is combined in a different way. The denotation of “every man” differs from the denotation of “any man”. Furthermore, in (c) the material of combination is also different. This proposition is not about men, but about any entity. Let us, for the sake of completeness, take two other propositions into account, namely:

- (d) All men constitute mankind
- (e) All men are mortal

If the word “all” is construed in the way fixed by Russell, then (d) is true, but (e) is false. For men are not mortal together. Therefore (e) is not equivalent to, let alone identical with, (a), (b) or (c).

Now the change effectuated by the conservative version of the ToD, or – what amounts to the same – the conservative way of taking the variable as fundamental, is, in spite of its conservatism, quite considerable. According to

128 POM §59, p.57.

this view, the propositions (a), (b), (c) and (e) are identical. Their difference is supposed to be merely verbal. And among them one, namely (c), actually reveals the true structure of the proposition, whereas (a), (b) and (e) conceal it. As far as “every”, “all” and “any” are concerned, one and only one denoting concept remains, namely “any entity”. The same procedure may be applied to “some”, “a” and to the existential quantifier, which can by means of negation be derived from the universal one. Taking into account the original paraphrase of sentences containing unambiguously denoting phrases, we get a simplified theory in which all apparent forms of denoting are reduced to one indefinable and archetypal case.

22.2 Russell’s way of opposing traditional logic

Russell’s sketched classification of enumerations or combinations has as its counterpart a classification of relations.¹²⁹ Both are, at least partly, conceived with an eye to a possible reduction to singular subject-predicate propositions. Plural and especially numerical propositions are bracketed together with relational propositions. They are supposed to be the most simple types of non-singular propositions.¹³⁰ In POM §94, p.95 Russell says:

Next after subject-predicate propositions come two types of propositions which appear equally simple. These are the propositions in which a relation is asserted between two terms, and those in which two terms are said to be two.

The two types differ from each other. For in plural propositions the order of enumeration is logically irrelevant, whereas in relational propositions it is of quintessential importance.¹³¹ Furthermore, relations are themselves constituents of the proposition, whereas conjunction or disjunction of terms does not add anything to the enumerated terms. They only indicate the mode of their combination. In the proposition expressed by “Brown is older than Jones”, the words “older than” represent a connecting constituent of the proposition. In propositions like that expressed by “Brown and Jones are two”,

129 The classification of relations has played a prominent role in Russell’s revolt against idealism. See Russell (1899), in which asymmetrical relations play more or less the same role as numerical propositions. See also Griffin (1991), Chapter 8. Cf. above 4.2.

130 Cf. 9.2, footnote 85.

131 See POM, Chapter XXVI, §§208-216, pp.218-226.

the word “and” does not represent anything connecting Brown and Jones.

An attempt to reduce relational propositions to singular subject-predicate propositions had actually been made by Leibniz. According to him, the proposition that Brown is older than Jones is only about Brown, not about Jones. It may be construed as: Brown is (older than Jones). Indeed, Leibniz does not want to suggest that only Brown is concerned. But Jones is the single subject of another proposition, namely: Jones is (younger than Brown). So, what seems to be something between two subjects is supposed to consist of converse relational predicates, each to be attributed to one single subject.

Leibniz’s reductionist approach is not arbitrary. It is based on an attempt to elaborate more consistently the logic and metaphysics of substance than most Aristotelians were used to do.¹³² The general principle of traditional, Aristotelian logic might be called the principle of the *privileged subject*. What is true of something is more general and therefore less real than that of which it is true. For what is universal is only true of what is less universal. The more universal exists only *in* what is less universal. Every true proposition is such that the predicate is *in* the subject (*predicatum in-est subiecto*).¹³³ Colours are qualities, red is a colour and some roses are red. But in the last analysis, qualities only exist in being coloured in such and such a way. And a particular shade of red eventually only exists in red individuals. Whatever is not an individual substance is ideal, not real. It is only conceptual and does not have any other being beyond being thought by real human thinkers or being understood by God.

In his rather idiosyncratic version of neo-Hegelian idealism, Russell made a loose use of the notion of substance. He did so in order to contrast the “abstract” character of geometrical space with a more “concrete” manifold. In geometry points and lines do not have any other being but being related to each other. Therefore their very reality seems to be jeopardized. For a relation cannot be real unless it is grounded in intrinsic properties of its bearers. Geometrical space is “abstract” because it lacks the required “thinghood” or “substantiality”.¹³⁴

In *My Philosophical Development*, Russell says:

I first realized the importance of the question of relations when I was working on Leibniz. I found – what books on Leibniz failed to make clear – that his metaphysic was explicitly based upon the doctrine that every proposition attributes a predicate to a subject and (what seemed to him

132 Cf. 0.2 and 18.5.

133 See Leibniz (1686), section VIII, p.433.

134 Cf. 0.2.

almost the same thing) that every fact consists of a substance having a property. I found that this same doctrine underlies the systems of Spinoza, Hegel and Bradley, who, in fact, all developed the doctrine with more logical rigour than is shown by Leibniz.

The lesson Russell learned from Leibniz is that the notion of substance and being-in is incompatible with the reality of relations, plurality, universals, space and time. In fact Russell had never deliberately rejected the reality of relations and plurality. But from Leibniz's lesson he concluded that the only way to save the reality of relations is: elaborating a logic and metaphysics without the notion of substance and the notion of being-in annexed to it. This project constitutes the drive behind the logic of POM.

Viewed from this perspective, the traditional principle of privileged being about is to be rejected because it *restricts* both reality and the scope and variety of propositions. Reality is restricted to the model of substance: being in itself, having private properties, called "accidents" and not being in something else. And propositions, which are not about such a single substance, are eventually supposed to be reducible to propositions attributing an individual accident to an individual substance.

Therefore a realist logic must be based *on the principle of the unrestricted subject*.¹³⁵ In order to elaborate it, Russell has to start with an alternative analysis of the subject-predicate proposition. According to Leibniz, there must be a reason why it is true that Socrates is human, namely that the predicate "human" actually is *in* Socrates. According to Russell, being-in is to be rejected and with it the so-called reason why what is true is true. A true subject-predicate proposition is not made true by its subject or by a fact concerning it. Truth is indefinable. A true proposition just is a fact.

Subject and predicate are not opposed by having the other in itself *versus* being in the other, but simply by occurring as something the proposition is about *versus* occurring as something the proposition is not about. But the predicate is no less real than the subject. For it must be capable of occurring

135 Landini (1998) has stressed the importance of the "unrestricted variable" to Russell's logic. It is preserved in the Ramified Theory of Types. But as far as Leibniz is concerned, I disagree with Landini. In my opinion he wrongly suggests that Russell once adopted from Leibniz the Scholastic principle *Quodlibet Ens est Unum* (pp.3-7). Russell's entities *are* not perforce *one*, but *may* occur as one. This is a subtle, but very consequential difference. A Russellian thing resembles a substance, because it cannot occur otherwise than as one. But Russell proudly accepts a lot of entities which are not things and are nevertheless not less real: concepts and combinations of entities. Initially the latter are supposed to be entities as well. For they may occur as one.

as subject in another proposition. Otherwise it would be something of which nothing is true or false. In this way we enter the view explained in 9.2.

Evidently the next step consists in considering elementary non-singular propositions, i.e., the above-mentioned plural and relational propositions. After having studied their classification, the notion of denoting is introduced. Although in 13.3 some attention has been paid to its importance, I want to conclude this subsection by explaining its reflexive character.

In *The Philosophy of Leibniz* §7, p.8, Russell says: "That all sound philosophy should begin with an analysis of propositions, is a truth too evident, perhaps, to demand a proof". This statement sounds as if Russell never had been of a different opinion. Nevertheless, it is one of the things he learned from Leibniz. But he also learned from him that it is difficult to carry it out consistently. For there is no vantage point outside the realm of propositions from which they might be analyzed. The analysis itself consists of propositions (see also 14.2). Look at any subject-predicate proposition and you will observe that different constituents are contained in it. This very fact does not fit into the mould of a subject-predicate proposition. It is itself a plural proposition, a proposition about different items. Look at any subject-predicate proposition and you will see that the proposition is about the subject. Being about is a dyadic relation. The proposition that the proposition "Socrates is human" is about Socrates, is itself a relational proposition. Therefore, there is no need to study different kinds of sentences extensively in order to discover new forms of propositions. The same argument is equally applicable to the question whether there are denoting concepts. If there are none, then every proposition must be such that it contains what it is about. Any term of a proposition would occur in it as one of its constituents just as Socrates occurs in the proposition expressed by "Socrates is human". Now, this very assumption is a proposition about any proposition. It is about infinitely many propositions. Even if they were contained in an infinitely complex proposition, we would not be able to understand it. Therefore, the very assumption that there are no denoting concepts would be unintelligible to us, if there were no denoting concepts. This does not prove that there must be denoting concepts, but it proves that if there were none, we would not be able to ask whether there are any. The very pinnacle of the principle of the unrestricted subject is to be found in propositions about any entity, i.e., propositions in which the unrestricted variable occurs.

22.3 Frege's way of opposing traditional logic

From the very start, i.e., already in his idealist phase, Russell wanted to be, as a philosopher, open-minded with respect to the sciences. Frege, by contrast, was a professional mathematician, gravely dissatisfied with the way his science and especially arithmetic, was being practised. He admired Euclid's achievement in geometry and he hoped to become himself the Euclid of modern arithmetic. Frege concerned himself with just as much –and as little – philosophy as he deemed to be a prerequisite for saving the scientific character of his beloved science.

Why was Frege so much dissatisfied with the state of arithmetic in his days? The answer can be dug up from the introduction to his mathematical dissertation.¹³⁶ There he points out that in modern times new kinds of numbers, not accepted by the Greeks, had gradually been adopted: irrational, negative and imaginary numbers. Frege is not opposed to this extension as such, but to the way it has been effectuated namely, by means of an appeal to geometrical intuition (*Anschauung*). The introduction of new kinds of numbers has been justified by representing them as points or extensions on a line or in a plane. Frege wants to justify the new numbers in a different way, by restoring the classical Greek separation of arithmetic from geometry! Identifying a number, say $\sqrt{2}$, with an extension is based on a confusion, according to him. A certain length may be associated with that number, provided it is compared by another length acting as comparative unit. A proportion of lengths may illustrate $\sqrt{2}$. What is more, the same proportion may be found between areas, weights or electrical resistances. Therefore, there is nothing particularly geometrical about $\sqrt{2}$. That number is unimaginable and free from whatever measurable magnitude. The basic principles of arithmetic cannot be based on some kind of sensual intuition; they must be purely logical.

Now, if logic happens to be a province of philosophy, then qua mathematician the mathematician has to concern himself with philosophy. But unfortunately, according to Frege, the very same kind of confusion can be found in traditional logic: the confusion between what is shared by many and the many sharing it. With this observation Frege obtains a very unusual and original philosophical point of view. From Thales onwards, Western philosophers have seriously tried to *reconcile* unity and plurality. According to Frege by contrast, the real difficulty is to clearly *distinguish* them from each other.

The Fregean distinction between what is shared by many and the many sharing it may be applied in many different ways. For comparing Frege with

136 See Frege (1874), pp.50-51 as compared with Frege (1885), p.107.

Russell, one basic application is of pre-eminent importance: that concerning the question at the extent to which the traditional distinction between subject and predicate is logically relevant. According to Frege, this question can be settled by investigating whether different sentences may have the same *proof-value*. If they have, i.e., if in all possible proofs they may be substituted for each other without impairing the validity of the inference concerned, then their semantic difference is logically irrelevant, irrespective of its importance to human discourse.

In *Begriffsschrift* Frege illustrates this by means of the following two sentences:

Near Plataeae the Greeks conquered the Persians

Near Plataeae the Persians were conquered by the Greeks

According to Frege these two sentences have the same proof-value. They are logically equivalent. Nevertheless they differ semantically. What is more, they differ in what they primarily are about. The former sentence is primarily about the Greeks, the latter primarily about the Persians. Therefore, the difference between subject and predicate, i.e., between a constituent the proposition is about and another constituent the proposition is not about, is logically irrelevant. The distinction is merely one in emphasis made in human interaction.¹³⁷

This view does not imply that ‘being about’ is logically irrelevant, but only selective, *unequal* ‘being about’! The distinction between subject and predicate may be restored, provided their difference is supposed to be based on something else. This actually happens in the course of Frege’s development. Three years later he introduces the distinction between concept and object.¹³⁸ The concept is said to have a “predicative nature”.¹³⁹ So, concept and object are opposed as “predicate” and “subject”, but not in the way that is supposed to be logically irrelevant in *Begriffsschrift*. They are dissimilar in *shape*. The proposition expressed by “Socrates is human” is just as much about Socrates as about the concept expressed by “.... is human”.

According to Frege, there is no problem at all in speaking about a concept, provided we actually use an incomplete expression. We only get involved in difficulties the moment we try to speak about a concept by means of a complete expression. “The concept human” is a complete expression and

137 See Frege (1879), p.3.

138 See Frege (1882), p.92. There, as far as I know, the first appearance of this distinction is to be found.

139 Frege (1892c), p.168.

therefore can only name an object, not a concept. Actually it names not the concept itself, but an object derived from it, namely its extension.

Thus far the problem seems to be very simple. And it actually is simple as long as we take for granted that the word “object” can be used to name objects, and the word “concept” to name what differs in shape from objects. We are so much used to the assumption that if something really is such and such, it can be called after what it is, namely such and such. For example, we see something of which it is true that it is a horse and then say: “Hello horse”. According to Frege however, this assumption is due to the very same kind of confusion we have met before, the confusion between the many individuals having something in common with what they have in common. It is promoted by an unsuspected ambiguity of natural language.

“Horse” is a general word. As predicate it belongs to the right side of “is” and cannot be conceived without it. Together with “is” and the indefinite article it constitutes a genuine, but incomplete expression, namely “.... is a horse”. This expression unambiguously names one specific predicate. If you want to name one of the objects of which this predicate is true, you ought to use a proper name such as “Bucephalus”. Now, we may also consider the word “object” as used by Frege. In fact the same applies to it. It names a *concept*, namely the one named “.... is an object”.

But what about the word “concept” as used by Frege? As long as we remain faithful to natural language, there is no reason whatever to assume that it differs significantly from “horse” or “object”. Originally it belongs to the expression “.... is a concept”. This expression names a particular concept that can be truly or falsely predicated of so-called objects named by a complete expression. But Frege primarily introduced the word “concept” in order to predicate it truly of concepts like the one expressed by “.... is a horse”. But the concept named “.... is a concept” cannot be significantly predicated of a concept similar to the one named “... is a horse”. This, then, is the real difficulty: by means of the word “concept”, he wants to do more than natural language allows him.¹⁴⁰ He wants to introduce a second-order predicate, i.e., a predicate whose argument place can be occupied by something like the concept named “... is a horse”. In a concept script such a predicate can be expressed by means of a quantifier and a bound variable, for example as follows:

$$\forall x\{\Phi(x) \vee \neg \Phi(x)\}$$

140 Cf. Frege's letter to Russell, July 28, 1902 in Frege (1976), pp.222-224.

If for the open argument-place indicated by the free variable ϕ we substitute the concept named "... is a horse", we get the following true proposition:

$$\forall x\{x \text{ is a horse} \vee \neg x \text{ is a horse}\}$$

This proposition is just as much about the concept named "... is a horse" as about the second order concept symbolized by the remaining part of the sentence. Just as the difference between first-order concepts and objects is a dissimilarity in shape, so is the difference between second- and first-order concepts. According to Frege, the bound variable does not have any meaning in itself. It is just an accessory part of the genuine symbol naming the second-order predicate. If the variable had any meaning in itself, it would ambiguously indicate objects. But according to Frege ambiguity is foreign to the nature of logic. The variable's sole role is: raising the level of discourse from objects to concepts.

Nevertheless, the variable is *restricted*. It shows the form of an object, without mentioning any object. The free variable $\phi()$ shows another form, the form of a first-order concept. Therefore, it is restricted as well. In this way we get a hierarchy of types. So, we are tempted to say that Frege does distinguish different types or categories of entities. But exactly because he does distinguish types, he does not accept the transcendental notion of "entity" or something like it. Whatever you want to speak about belongs to a definite type in virtue of its shape. Therefore, this very statement is illegitimate. The best and only way to accept it is in silence. However, as will be explained in the next subsection, this quasi-Wittgensteinian feature of Frege's logic is to be put in perspective.

22.4 Sense, reference and Frege's rapprochement to Russell

By means of the distinction between sense and reference Frege, introduces something very much like a transcendental notion. For that distinction may be represented by a dividing line parallel to the sentence and perpendicular to the lines marking the differences in type. And these differences in type are in fact nothing else but dissimilarities in shape between the parts constituting the sentence or its content. The sentence "Socrates is human" is itself a genuine and complete expression. According to Frege, it consists of two dissimilar parts. One of them, namely the proper name "Socrates", is just as complete as the whole sentence in which it occurs. The other constituent, the remaining part of the sentence "... is human", is incomplete but nevertheless just as

genuine as “Socrates” or the sentence as a whole. Both the sentence as a whole and each of its genuine parts have sense and reference. Just as “Socrates” is complete, so its sense and its reference, viz. Socrates himself. And the expression “... is human” is incomplete in the same way as are its sense and its reference: it can be completed by something complete.

In this way the distinction between sense and reference is both type-indifferent and complexity-indifferent. If a certain expression has sense and reference, then all three must be of the same type. If Socrates is an object, then both his proper name and the sense expressed by it must equally be objects. Furthermore, if a genuine expression is composed of genuine parts, then the very same complexity is to be found in both its sense and its reference. In other words, the opposition between sense and reference is not based on a contrast in complexity. That is one of the reasons why Frege’s theory is significantly different from Russell’s theory of denoting concepts.

Nevertheless, in virtue of this remarkable difference, Frege is forced to meet Russell! For although according to Frege, each variable is restricted to one particular type, *within* that type each variable is *unrestricted*. A first-order concept must be defined for all possible objects, without any exception.¹⁴¹ Otherwise it is not a genuine concept at all. Maybe this view is contestable. At any rate, the later Wittgenstein vehemently criticized it.¹⁴² But in this connection I am not discussing the validity of Frege’s logic, but only its nature. And its nature is such that it would be preposterous and completely un-Fregean to assume that, for example, the sense of a complete expression would be an exceptional kind of unmentionable object, beyond the range of significance of first-order concepts. In other words, if by the introduction of the distinction between sense and reference, new kinds of objects are to be adopted, they must be treated as genuine objects, being capable of occurring as something that a thought can be about. Just as there are objects of which the predicate named “...is a horse” can be truly predicated, so there must be objects of which the predicate “.... is a sense” can be truly predicated. Otherwise the introduction of the notion of sense would be vacuous. The same argument can be applied to different types of incomplete senses.¹⁴³

By far not everything in Frege’s universe is a sense. But anything whatever, be it a sense or something else, is referred to by innumerable senses. And this “being referred to” is supposed to be completely independent of human language. For the relation of sense to its reference (Frege prefers to say that the sense *determines* its reference) is not “linguistic through the phrase”.

141 See Frege (1891), p.135 and Frege (1903), §56, p.69-70.

142 Wittgenstein (1953), Part I, §71.

143 See Frege (1892b).

Senses are specific kinds of “entities”, but they cannot be confined in an ontological prison. For they are everywhere, in any category, and they are around everything, even around every sense. Therefore the notion of reference is pre-eminently transcendental. For absolutely everything is a reference, i.e., is something about which some things are true or false. This, then, is a very remarkable similarity with Russell, a similarity due to the introduction of sense and reference!

The importance of this point may be highlighted in taking into account the fact that reference and *truth-value* are linked by Frege. *Bedeutung* is whatever is of importance to, or identical with, the truth-value. And truth is directive to logic.¹⁴⁴ At first sight this seems to imply that a lot of things, including senses, are outside the scope of reference. However, this is only true within the limits of a specific context. If we want to know something, a lot of things are irrelevant. But maybe, when seen from another point of view, they are. Reference is not confined to things human beings happen to be interested in. According to Frege, a true thought is nothing else but a fact.¹⁴⁵ Therefore supposing certain things to be beyond the scope of reference amounts to the same as supposing them to be beyond the realm of what facts are concerned with.

In *Begriffsschrift* Frege introduced the sign \equiv for identity of *proof-value*.¹⁴⁶ He supposed this sign to be synonymous with the sign = used in mathematics. Later he realized this assumption to be unwarranted.¹⁴⁷ Identity of proof-value is stronger than identity in mathematics. By means of Leibniz’s law, i.e., the principle of substitution, the latter is allied with identity of truth-value. Identity of proof-value implies identity of truth-value, but not the other way round. In fact, Frege’s sense is nothing else than proof-value. If in whichever proof two expressions can be substituted for each other *salva validitate*, i.e., without impairing its validity, they have the same sense. If two expressions can be substituted for each other in any sentence *salva veritate*, i.e., without impairing its truth-value, they have the same reference.

144 See e.g. Frege (1918), p.342.

145 Ibid. 359.

146 Frege (1879), §8, pp.13-15.

147 Frege (1892a), p.143.

23 The fundamental Frege as escaping Russell's perception

23.1 Russell's misconception of Frege

In the previous subsection I have argued that Frege's introduction of the distinction between sense and reference involves an unsuspected rapprochement to Russell. The applicability of the GEA's last part to Frege is based on what this rapprochement consists in, viz., the principle that any sense or any meaning must be such that a proposition can be about it without being about an expression expressing that sense or meaning. What is more, I have advocated that the GEA, in virtue of its quasi-Fregean origin, is more pre-eminently valid as criticism of Frege than as criticism of Russell's former theory of denoting concepts. For an appeal to a special kind of occurrence is still open to Russell, but is foreign to the nature of Frege's logic.

This rather unorthodox view seems to imply that I do not worry about Russell's possible misunderstandings of Frege's logic in general and of his theory of sense and reference in particular. In this section I shall discuss these misunderstandings in order to show why, in my opinion, they leave the validity of the GEA untouched in spite of their weighty consequences. Their main impact consists in limitations imposed upon the role Frege has been allowed to play in OD. In the next subsection I shall illustrate this in view of the un-Meinongian Frege.

Russell's main misconception of Frege can be found in the very first point of difference mentioned in Appendix A of POM. There (§475, p.501) Russell says: "Frege does not think that there is a contradiction in the notion of concepts which cannot be made logical subjects". Evidently Russell has in mind Frege's saying: "it is a mere illusion to suppose that a concept can be made an object without altering it".¹⁴⁸ What Frege actually means has been explained in 22.3. The difference between concept and object is construed as a categorical difference, displayed by a dissimilarity in shape. It does not have anything to do with inequality in being, or not being, the subject matter of a proposition. Russell wrongly identifies Frege's objects with logical subjects.

In this way Frege's view is not, as Geach seems to suppose, "distorted into his own mould", i.e., Russell's mould, but depicted as being more strongly opposed to it than it actually is. In fact Russell perceives what deviates from his own mould as if it were opposed to it. In his eyes Frege appears as collaborating with traditional logic. And maybe in Frege's, eyes Russell has appeared in a similar way: as the logician who fails to radically criticize the

148 Frege (1884), p.X.

Aristotelian scheme of subject and predicate. In their correspondence this point plays a prominent role without ever being cleared up.

This misunderstanding is quite consequential. Russell fails to see *why and in how far* Frege's theory of sense and reference is more sweeping than his own theory of denoting concepts, viz., as it is based on the principle of equality of the constituents of a proposition as being something the proposition is about. Consequently Frege's parsing of the proposition and its verbal expression must be based on a different principle. In fact it is based on dissimilarity in shape. This quite un-Russellian analysis must be completed before the distinction of sense and reference can be introduced. For the latter distinction is applied to all and only all genuine logical symbols that contribute to expressing what is true or false.

This implies that Frege's distinction is not applied to a lot of expressions that might be supposed to deserve it. For example, it cannot be applied to the word "is" as it occurs in "Socrates is human". It cannot even be applied to the word "human" in isolation. For only the expression "... is human" deserves to be called a genuine symbol. It also implies, that some genuine symbols, which are used in Frege's own *Begriffsschrift*, are not allowed to have sense or reference, namely those symbols that mark the framework of proof: the vertical judgement stroke and the long horizontal conclusion stroke. They do not contribute to expressing what is true or false.

These examples are harmless in so far as Russell never supposed them to be capable of having meaning and denotation. But there are other examples, which do satisfy this requirement. Already in his *Begriffsschrift* §9, more than a decade before the introduction of the sense-reference distinction, Frege wrote that an expression like "every positive integer" does not have any meaning in itself!¹⁴⁹ The reason behind this view is essentially the same as that formulated twenty-six years later by Russell in favour of the ToD: such an expression consists of parts that do not really belong together. In his theory of sense and reference, Frege remains faithful to this view. Expressions like "every positive integer" or "some men" or "any man" do not have sense and reference, because they fail to be genuine logical expressions. But according to Russell's theory of denoting concepts, they have meaning and denotation. Here we are faced with an unsuspected difference: As far as ambiguously denoting phrases are concerned, Russell's former theory is more sweeping than Frege's!

This other side of the difference never got through to Russell. In comparing Frege's theory of sense and reference with his own theory of denoting concepts, he always left ambiguously denoting phrases aside. Within the limits of

149 See Frege (1879), p.17.

this perspective, he quite well perceived two real interrelated differences. Frege's theory is indifferent towards complexity and is not only applied to unambiguously denoting phrases, but to proper names as well. Therefore it is more sweeping.

In OD this view is put forward in a rather confusing way. After having criticized Meinong in paragraph 10 on account of the contradiction involved by the existent present king of France who in fact does not exist but in virtue of his very essence is forced to exist, Russell introduces Frege as follows:

The above breach of the law of contradiction is avoided by Frege's theory. He distinguishes, in a denoting phrase, two elements, which we may call the *meaning* and the *denotation*. "Thus the centre of mass of the solar system at the beginning of the twentieth century" is highly complex in *meaning*, but its *denotation* is a certain point, which is simple. The solar system, the twentieth century, etc., are constituents of the *meaning*; but the *denotation* has no constituents at all.

This account of Frege's view is in fact an account of Russell's own view. However, Russell is aware of this distortion and then adds the following footnote:

Frege distinguishes the two elements of meaning and denotation everywhere, and not only in complex denoting phrases. Thus it is the *meanings* of the constituents of a denoting complex that enter into its *meaning*, not their *denotation*. In the proposition "Mont Blanc is over 1,000 metres high", it is, according to him, the *meaning* of "Mont Blanc", not the actual mountain, that is a constituent of the *meaning* of the proposition.

If Russell had realized that in another respect Frege's theory is less sweeping, he would have hailed him as precursor of the theory of indefinite descriptions. For he used to be overpolite in honouring his predecessors. But in paragraphs 4, 5 and 6, the part of OD devoted to the discussion of ambiguously denoting phrases, only Bradley is mentioned, not Frege!

23.2 The fundamental Frege as un-Meinongian

It is quite remarkable that about four fifths of the part of OD containing its famous KFA is devoted to Frege. This is due to the fact, which was discussed in our chapter II, that in the period shortly before OD Russell adopted a quasi-

Fregean view in order to avoid his own former quasi-Meinongianism. That is why in OD the main target of Russell's criticism is Frege, not Meinong. Primarily he wants to prove that the un-Meinongian Frege is unable to adequately deal with the problem of non-being.

But there is something strange about the way Frege is introduced. He is supposed to avoid the Meinongian contradiction in virtue of the distinction between sense and reference. But in fact Meinong could probably have made a similar distinction without abandoning his firm belief in unreal objects. And although Frege never mentioned Meinong, his attitude was distinctly un-Meinongian long before he adopted the theory of sense and reference. In other words, the un-Meinongian Frege who appears in OD is unduly isolated from the fundamental one. In order to show this, I shall start with the question concerning the way in which the fundamental Frege is un-Meinongian. In the next subsection I shall discuss puzzle (3), in which the climax of the KFA is reached. In doing so, I shall deliberately and as long as possible postpone the introduction of the distinction between sense and reference.

Meinong's view may be summarized in two points.¹⁵⁰ Firstly, the universe of scientific and philosophical discourse is wider than reality. We can judge and think about what is not real. Scientists may discover that what was supposed to be real is in fact unreal, for example the proportion of natural numbers whose square is 2. Secondly, although something (a proposition or 'objective', as Meinong used to call it) may be true or false *about* something unreal, what is true or what is a fact, is real and what is false is unreal. A real fact may be about something unreal and an unreal fact may be about something real. Therefore, if we discover that something we supposed to be true is in fact false, we discover something about something unreal, namely an unreal "fact" or "objective".

Frege rejects both principles. Firstly, according to him, the universe of scientific discourse is "confined" to reality. Therefore it can neither be true nor false that something is unreal. If a judgeable content is true about something, it must be real. Only what is real can really be named. "Sherlock Holmes" does not name an unreal person. It just is a real expression of which it is false that it is a name. And the word "name", or more precisely the expression "... is a name", is a real name of a first order-concept.

Secondly, what is false is not less real than what is true. Truth and falsity are indefinable. They both presuppose reality. If a false judgeable content would be unreal, it could not truly be denied.

Frege's next step is quite un-Russellian. It consists in the introduction of

150 Cf. 4.1.

the notion of “existence” in a quite peculiar way, namely as a second order predicate which can truly or falsely be applied to first-order concepts, not to objects. Frege is led to this view by an approach to numerical propositions that is different from the one discussed in 22.1. Russell happened to be concerned with Brown and Jones who *are two* of Mrs. Smith’s suitors. Frege is concerned with dissimilarity in shape between the constituents a proposition is indifferently about. According to him, the predicate “two” cannot be attributed to objects. For if we count, *what* we count is specified by a concept. If we want to answer the question “How many suitors has Mrs. Smith?”, then that concept is the one named “... is a suitor of Mrs. Smith”. If the question is “How many suitors of Mrs. Smith are mentioned by Russell?”, then another concept is involved. But in any event, the number is attributed to one concept. It *has* two or more instances. And this *having* two is a second-order predicate to be expressed by means of quantifiers and their bound variables.

Frege’s favourite number is zero, whereas Russell does not like it at all.¹⁵¹ In *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik* §46, p.59, he says:

.... the content of a statement of number is an assertion about a concept. This is perhaps clearest with the number 0. If I say “Venus has 0 moons”, there simply does not exist any moon or agglomeration of moons for anything to be asserted of; but what happens is that a property is assigned to the *concept* “moon of Venus”, namely that of including nothing under it.

Among numbers zero is pre-eminently allied with existence. For, as Frege says in §53: “Affirmation of existence is in fact nothing but denial of the number nought.” And denial of existence is in fact nothing but affirmation of the number nought. After Galileo had discovered four moons of Jupiter, astronomers must have asked whether other planets such as Venus also have moons. In doing so, they grasped something real, namely the concept “moon of Venus”. And when they finally concluded that Venus has zero moons or that moons of Venus do not exist, they denied an equally real second-order predicate to the said concept. Nothing unreal was involved. A concept is not less real when nothing falls under it.

Suppose that one of those astronomers had made a mistake and had jumped to the conclusion that Venus has one moon. Then he could have exclaimed: “I have seen the moon of Venus”. Here the definite article appears. According to Frege, this is of utmost logical importance. For it indicates the shift from concept to object. In §51 he says:

151 See POM, chapter XXII, §§172-177, pp.184-187.

With a concept the question is always whether anything, and if so what, falls under it. With a proper name such questions make no sense. We should not be deceived by the fact that language makes use of proper names, for instance Moon, as concept words, and vice versa; this does not affect the distinction between the two. As soon as a word is used with the indefinite article or in the plural without any article, it is a concept word.

How could a more prudent astronomer challenge the opinion of his rash colleague? According to Frege, he cannot put forward that the moon of Venus does not exist. For if “the moon of Venus” stands for anything at all, it stands for an object, not a concept. But he cannot say either that the moon of Venus is unreal. For whenever you say something true or false, its subject matter must be real. As seen from Frege’s perspective, there is no other possible solution than making a *linguistic turn*. The expression “the moon of Venus” is not a name, although it looks like one. In this statement nothing unreal is involved, only truth or falsity about real items.

Being not a name amounts to the same as: not naming anything. Therefore, the linguistic turn consists in re-introducing something very much like “existence”. For the name-like *expression* “the moon of Venus” plays a similar role as the concept “moon of Venus” in the proposition that moons of Venus do not exist. Just as the concept *has* nothing falling under it, so the said expression *has* no reference; it is *bedeutungslos*, as Frege would say. Indeed there are two differences. The purported name is complete and can be named by an equally complete expression containing quotation marks. Therefore it is an object, not a concept. Furthermore, if it actually has any reference, then it can only have *one*. The concept named “.... is a moon of Venus” could have as many objects falling under it as you like. Besides zero and one, there are other possibilities. But an expression whose namehood is questioned can only have zero referents or one. For referring or indicating is essentially unambiguous. When one and the same expression, say “the town”, has different referents in different contexts, then, according to Frege, it is not a genuine name at all. The verbal expression together with one specific nonverbal context may be a genuine and unambiguous name.

23.3 Application to OD’s puzzle (3)

Let us now look at the KFA. It starts in a rather unconvincing way. For in OD, paragraph 12, Russell simply states that by the sentence “The present King of France is bald”, a false proposition is stated. Both Meinong and Frege would deny this, although on different grounds. Meinong would deny it because

the essence of the present King of France does as yet not include anything about his possible hair growth. Frege would deny it because the expression “the present King of France” does not name anything at all. That sentence is neither true nor false, for it fails to be about something real.¹⁵²

Evidently Russell has been aware of the insufficiency of his first argument. For he adds a lot of things to it in order to make it more compelling. It culminates in the exposition of puzzle (3) in OD, paragraph 16. There Russell says:

Consider the proposition “A differs from B”. If this is true, there is a difference between A and B, which fact may be expressed in the form “the difference between A and B subsists”. But if it is false that A differs from B, then there is no difference between A and B, which fact may be expressed in the form “the difference between A and B does not subsist”. But how can a non-entity be the subject of a proposition? “I think, therefore I am” is no more evident than “I am the subject of a proposition, therefore I am”, provided “I am” is taken to assert subsistence or being, not existence. Hence, it would appear, it must always be self-contradictory to deny the being of anything; but we have seen, in connection with Meinong, that to admit being also sometimes leads to contradictions. Thus if A and B do not differ, to suppose either that there is, or that there is not, such an object as “the difference between A and B” seems equally impossible.

This is a remarkable argument, for it is based on a cautious rapprochement to Meinong’s second principle, viz. that the opposition between truth and falsity somehow corresponds to the opposition between real and unreal. Russell’s view is only semi-Meinongian. For he does not adopt the assumption that false propositions, or “objectives”, as Meinong calls them, are unreal. Nevertheless, according to him, truth and falsity of a real proposition correspond to the reality or unreality of something else, namely what is named by the denoting phrase derived from the sentence. If the true sentence “Caesar died” is transformed into the unambiguously denoting phrase “the death of Caesar”, then something different from both the proposition and its truth-value is mentioned. But if this procedure is applied to a sentence expressing a false proposition, then the unambiguously denoting phrase derived from the sentence does not denote anything at all.

Returning to Venus, let us consider the proposition expressed by “The Morningstar differs from the Eveningstar”. According to Frege, the discovery that this proposition is false belongs to the primitive scientific achievements

152 Cf. 2.2.

of astronomy. According to Russell's argument it amounts to the same as the discovery that the supposed difference between the Morningstar and the Eveningstar is not real.

How would the fundamental Frege deal with this puzzle? Suppose he is prepared to accept that Russell's principle to each genuine sentence expressing a judgeable content, whose truth is questionable, corresponds a complete expression whose namehood is questionable in the same degree. Even in that case, he would not accept that the reality of something could be disproved. Frege would simply take recourse to the above-mentioned linguistic turn. The discovery that the Morningstar is not different from the Eveningstar amounts to the same as the discovery that the real expression "the difference between the Morningstar and the Eveningstar" is not truly a name. Nothing unreal is involved.

Now, Russell could object that in this way all scientific discoveries are unduly transformed into linguistic discoveries. Frege, I presume, would not be indifferent to this criticism. For once he criticized his own former view on identity on precisely the same grounds! In *Begriffsschrift* §8, he had tried to rescue the informative character of identity in assuming that it is to be construed as *having* the same content. The proposition that $5 > 3$ is about numbers, but the proposition that $5 = 2 + 3$ is about symbols. For the latter means that different things, namely "5" and " $2 + 3$ ", *have* the same content. According to this view the proposition that the Morningstar is the same as the Eveningstar would be informative thanks to its being about different expressions. But, Frege objects in *On Sense and Reference*, this is not sufficient for explaining the cognitive, scientific value of identity statements. This then is one of the reasons that made him introduce the distinction between sense and reference.

Does this distinction matter to puzzle (3)? Yes, instead of the phrase its *sense* could act as having or not having a reference. In this way the statement that the expression "the difference between the Morningstar and the Eveningstar" is not truly a name, can be substituted by the statement that the sense expressed by that expression does not *have* a reference. And if the drawback of an undue linguistic turn is to be avoided, mentioning the phrase is to be avoided as well. Therefore sense-mentioning inverted commas are to be introduced. In this way the KFA is transformed into a new version of the GEA!

24 Appearance and disappearance of the fundamental Frege

24.1 The fundamental Frege in OF §§56-57

In the first section of this chapter I have followed the course of OF in discussing the conception, the nature and the predicament of the ToD. The very same problem on whose occasion the new theory is conceived, also threatens its viability. This seems to be a contradiction. But it is not, because in fact the ToD is jeopardized by the *other side* of the problem it successfully avoids. The problem of unambiguously denoting concepts, i.e., the one discussed in the GEA, is avoided. But the problem of ambiguously denoting concepts, whose most pointed version may be put into the AEA, challenges the ToD. On account of it, Russell is forced to reject the ToD's conservative version in which the variable is still explained by the ambiguously denoting concept "any entity". The only way to save the ToD from ruin is: taking the variable as more fundamental than denoting concepts.

In this connection the fundamental Frege appears on the stage. At the end of 21.3 I have deliberately postponed the discussion of the role he actually plays in OF. For the context of his emergence is not only determined by the above-sketched visible circumstances, but by two invisible forces as well, namely the un-Fregean background of Russell's logic and the limitations of his perception. That is why, in section 22 and 23, I have successively discussed these elements.

Concerning the latter, I have argued in 23.1 that Russell both overestimates and underestimates the difference between Frege and himself. This seems to be a contradiction, but it is not. For Russell overstates the difference in supposing that according to Frege, a proposition cannot be about a concept. This exaggeration is based on his failure to see that Frege does not want to be concerned with unequal being about at all. Russell just ignores that Frege's analysis of the proposition follows a quite different pattern. From the very start, it is involved in a struggle with natural language. Genuine logical expressions are to be detected and to be distinguished from apparent ones. In this connection Frege anticipates the theory of indefinite descriptions. But from the very start, i.e., already in POM Appendix A, Russell fails to see this. This blind spot has obscured OD and has contributed to the disappearance of the fundamental Frege from it.

But it is not sufficient to account for his disappearance. In OF the fundamental Frege actually appears, not of course as a precursor of the theory of indefinite descriptions, but as providing a different view of the variable. This Frege, once actually perceived by Russell, equally disappears from OD,

but evidently in a different way. He is consciously ignored. This, then, is the first phase of the more long-lasting process whose meaning and consequences constitute the subject matter of this section as a whole: the process terminating in Frege's total elimination from later expositions of the ToD.

Before quoting the rather puzzling passage from OF §§56-57, I shall try to summarize Frege's view of the variable in such a way that what in it is acceptable to Russell can be distinguished from what is not. In doing so I shall make use of what has been discussed in section 22. In fact Russell accepts two elements from Frege:

- a) The variable does not have any meaning in itself.
- b) Nevertheless its range is "determined" but not by a denoting concept. It is determined by the propositional function whose argument place it indicates.

Ad a) Frege's system of logic is immune to the AEA. Only the GEA is relevant to it. As far as I can see, the latter undermines the distinction between sense and reference in general. For according to Frege, all genuine expressions, whether complete or not, unambiguously "determine" their reference if there is one. As the word "determine" suggests, something like ambiguously denoting is foreign to the nature of his logic. Frege never supposed the variable to have any meaning in itself. Therefore, the distinction between sense and reference cannot be applied to it. However serious the impact of the GEA might be, his view of the variable just remains what it was.

Russell is in a quite different predicament. Never before had he supposed the variable to be without meaning. What is more, he had not done so because he supposed the variable to denote ambiguously in virtue of its constant meaning. It unambiguously means something particular, namely "any entity" and in virtue of that constant meaning it enables propositions of finite complexity to be about infinitely many entities. Therefore, Russell's system of logic is much more seriously threatened by the AEA than by the GEA. If he wants to save the ToD, he is forced to abandon the notion "unambiguously denoting in virtue of constant meaning". That is the only reason why he is prepared to accept at least something of the Fregean view.

But he is not prepared to adopt more than what is urgently needed. The Fregean view that neither the variable nor anything else ambiguously denotes, is unacceptable to Russell. Viewed from this perspective it would amount to a disavowal of the very spirit of his former "revolt into pluralism". If Frege were right, then all plurality could be relegated to higher predicates. The

proposition that there are infinitely many natural numbers would attribute one second order predicate to a single first-order concept. The proposition that every man is mortal would be reduced to a proposition about concepts. In POM §88, p.90 this view is ascribed to Bradley and criticized as follows:

The variable is, from the formal standpoint, the characteristic notion of Mathematics. Moreover, it is *the* method of stating general theorems, which always *mean* something different from the intensional propositions to which such logicians as Mr Bradley endeavour to reduce them. That the meaning of an assertion about all men or any man is different from the meaning of an equivalent assertion about the concept *man*, appears to me, I must confess, to be a self-evident truth – as evident as the fact that propositions about John are not about the *name* John.

As far as I can see, the Russell of OF is not prepared to revoke this statement. Therefore to him, the only qualified way out is the view that the variable ambiguously denotes without any constant meaning.

Ad b) According to Frege, the range of the variable need not be specified by means of something like a denoting concept, because it is, without saying specified by the argument place of the function the quantifier is applied to. The shape of that argument place shows the range of the variable. Its range is a range of *significance*. A first order predicate can only be significantly, i.e., truly or falsely, be applied to something whose name is complete, i.e., to an object.

This aspect of the Fregean doctrine is appealing to the Russell of OF. For the proportional function, as he likes to call it, takes over the job of the failing denoting concept “any entity”. This adds to the credibility of ambiguously denoting without denoting meaning.

But as seen from Russell’s angle, the orthodox Fregean view contains three inedible ingredients.

The first consists in the assumption that the variable is *restricted* in its range. Russell cannot accept this without renouncing to what is quintessential to his realism. At no price is he willing to give up the unrestricted variable. Even in his later ramified theory of types, it is preserved.¹⁵³ Therefore, the range of significance is to be construed in the following un-Fregean way: the variable marks an entity position, which can be occupied by anything whatever without preventing the proposition from being true or false. However, if this is Russell’s view, it must be asked whether the propositional

153 See Landini (1998).

function is itself supposed to be an entity. As far as I know this question is not discussed in OF.

According to Frege the first order concept or concepts to which the quantifier is applied, occur as something the proposition is *about*. The proposition expressed by “All whales are mammals” is neither about whales nor about any other objects.¹⁵⁴ It is about the concepts named “.... is a whale” and “.... is a mammal”. For the above-mentioned reason, this is unacceptable to Russell. Even if the said proposition is supposed to be conditional and therefore not about whales, it must still be about anything whatever.

Therefore, the universal quantifier cannot be construed as a second-order predicate. That is the counterpart to Russell’s refusal to construe the propositional function as something the proposition is about. According to Frege, the quantifier belongs to the judgeable content and as such has nothing in particular to do with the assertion symbolized by the vertical judgement stroke. Russell rejects this view. According to him the universal quantifier is to be construed as *universal assertion*. Consequently he fails to use the Fregean concavity equipped with the variable.

Instead of $\frown^x \Phi(x)$ Russell simply writes: $\vdash \Phi(x)$

The symbol \vdash is seen as the quasi-Fregean symbolic equivalent of “always true” as introduced in OD, paragraph 4.

Nevertheless, in the passage from OF to be quoted below, Russell does attach importance to Frege’s horizontal content stroke. He proceeds as if, according to Frege $\text{—}\Phi(x)$, could be isolated from $\frown^x \text{—}$

The former is construed as symbolizing “the truth of $\Phi(x)$ ”. Unfortunately I am unable to satisfactorily explain what Russell must have had in mind. Moreover, the exegesis of the text is made even more difficult by his referring to *2.31, a *numbered proposition from a lost draft of Principia*.

At any rate the main idea behind Russell’s remarks must be, that $\text{—}\Phi(x)$ paves the way of the universal assertion. The propositional function is not itself something true or false. It *has* true or false propositions as its instances. The universal assertion is neither about the propositional function, not about its instances, but about whatever these instances may significantly be about. The former conjunction or disjunction of terms denoted by a denoting concept is replaced by a universal assertion of all instances of a propositional function. In saying this, I make use of the denoting phrase “all instances of a propositional function”. But that is, Russell would say, due to the fact that I am speaking

154 Frege (1884), §47, pp.60-61.

about the assertion. *Making* a universal assertion does not involve any appeal to denoting concepts.¹⁵⁵

The text in OF §§56-57 runs as follows:

If we adopted Frege's symbol $\Phi 'x$ for "the truth of $\Phi 'x$ ", and if we decided that this symbol was to confine the range of x to $\Phi 'x$, then " $\Phi 'x$ " would mean "the truth of Φ for *any* x ", which would enable us to state *2.31 formally.

We may put it thus:

" $\Phi 'x$ ".= " $\Phi 'x$, where x may be anything"

" $\Phi 'x$ ".= " $\Phi 'x$, where x may be anything, is true".

The point about meaning and denotation is still unsettled. Does $\Phi 'x$ have a constant meaning, as well as a variable denotation? Consider first a particular Φ , say $x \supset x$. Then

$x \supset x$.= " $x \supset x$ " is true, where x may be anything.

No value need be assigned to x , because $x \supset x$ is *always* true. There is no distinction of meaning and denotation; there is only the difference between $\Phi 'x$ by itself and " $\vdash \Phi 'x$ ", as Frege does, as the assertion of " $\Phi 'x$ ". Thus we seem to have pure ambiguous denotation without any constant meaning.

24.2 Disappearance of the fundamental Frege from OD

If this view actually is adopted in OD paragraph 4, then Russell might be justified in being silent about the AEA. Nevertheless, the author of OD turns out to be equally silent about three other issues: his possible indebtedness to Frege, his opinion on denoting phrases of the form "any so and so" and finally the question whether the variable is supposed to be denoting. The last point is of greatest importance. It bears on the very essence of the proposed theory in relation to denoting. If in an article on denoting a new theory is put forward, a theory based on taking "the notion of the variable as fundamental", then we

155 See Russell (1919), p.156: "A descriptive function, e.g. "the hardest proposition in A 's mathematical treatise," will not be a propositional function, although its values are propositions. But in such a case the propositions are only described: in a propositional function, the values must actually *enunciate* propositions."

are entitled to asking in which way it is fundamental *with respect to denoting*. At least three alternatives might be considered: either the variable denotes in virtue of its meaning, or it denotes without meaning, or it neither denotes nor has any meaning in itself. If Russell had wholeheartedly adopted the second alternative, then the import of the proposed theory would be that denoting in virtue of a supposed meaning is to be reduced to denoting without meaning. But he does not say so.

That is why I remain faithful to the view explained in chapter I, 2.4, namely that OD's last sentence is to be taken for more than just an insignificant sign of polite modesty. In OD Russell primarily claims to show that the issue of denoting is much more difficult than might be supposed. The available theories lead to unsuspected problems. Tentatively a new theory is put forward.

Shortly after OD's publication, Moore asked Russell the following question on account of paragraph 37:

You say '*all* the constituents of propositions we apprehend are entities with which we have immediate acquaintance.' Have we, then, immediate acquaintance with the variable? And what sort of an entity is it?

Two days later Russell replied:

I admit that the question you raise about the variable is puzzling, as are all questions about it. The view I usually incline to is that we have immediate acquaintance with the variable, but it is not an entity. Then at other times I think it is an entity, but an indeterminate one. In the former view there is still a problem of meaning and denotation as regards the variable itself. I only profess to reduce the problem of denoting to the problem of the variable. This latter is horribly difficult, and there seem equally strong objections to all the views I have been able to think of.¹⁵⁶

24.3 Frege's total eclipse and the rise of the ToD as such

For the sake of convenience I have called the new theory of denoting put forward in OD the *theory of descriptions*. However, in OD itself the newborn brainchild is still nameless. As far as I can see, it only got its name the moment it was legitimated. At that instant Russell did more than just give a name to a nameless theory. He changed both his attitude towards it and the way he

¹⁵⁶ I borrow these quotations from Hylton (1990), p.256.

presented it to the world. He did not only change his degree of self-confidence about it, but also his view on the nature of the theory. Henceforth it was no longer put forward as a new theory of *denoting*, but as a theory of *descriptions*. The essence of this turn consists in turning away from the perilous issue of denoting.

The new approach starts with renaming ambiguously and unambiguously denoting phrases. From now on they are called “indefinite” and “definite descriptions”. Thus far only the name of the topic has changed. But the strategy is changed as well. The question put forward by Russell simply is, whether descriptions are names or not. This is the essential dilemma. Whether you do or do not prefer to distinguish descriptions from non-descriptive proper names, is immaterial. For the question is only, whether descriptions name anything. If they do, a proposition in whose verbal expression the description occurs, is *about* what it names. Whether the description names in virtue of its supposed meaning or sense does not matter.

Essentially this approach is Fregean in character. For Frege’s being the precursor of the theory of indefinite descriptions is, as I have argued in 23.1, not based on his theory of sense and reference, but on what precedes it, namely the distinction between genuine and spurious logical expressions, i.e., between real and apparent names. However, Russell is not aware of the Fregean slant of his new strategy. For he never recognized Frege as forerunner of his own theory.

Anyhow, the message can now be put forward in a very concise and appealing way: descriptions are not names. The two main problems discussed in OD remain, but the arguments related to them are considerably simplified. If “the round square” were a name, then the true proposition expressed by “The round square does not exist” would be about a non-existent entity, which is impossible. Similarly: if “the author of *Waverley*” were a name, then what it is supposed to name would either be identical with Scott or different from him. Therefore the proposition expressed by “Scott is the author of *Waverley*” would either be about Scott and Scott or about Scott and something else. In the former case the proposition would be trivial, in the latter it would be false. But in fact it is neither trivial nor false. Therefore “The author of *Waverley*” is not a name, QED.

Whatever the value of these arguments may be, they purport to be at least as “imperative” as the KFA in OD. The GEA has disappeared and the word “curious”, expressing uncertainty about its possible explanation, as well. What is more, together with the whole issue of denoting, the AEA has equally disappeared. There is no more any need to explain in which way the variable is fundamental as compared to denoting.

Just as Meinong is inevitably associated with the problem of non-being, so

Frege is associated with the problem of informative identity. However, in his later expositions of the ToD, Russell fails to mention Frege. Only Meinong remains. How is this to be accounted for? Evidently, both the un-Meinongian Frege and the Frege of indirect sense and informative identity have to disappear because they are associated with denoting. And, as I have tried to make clear in the previous subsection, the same applies to the fundamental Frege as perceived by Russell. Consequently, the new approach results in Frege's total eclipse.

Finally, Russell's recollection of the true origin of the ToD disappears as well. The rise of the ToD as such is, as far as I can see, simultaneous with the rise of the official story. In chapter II, I have analyzed this story and argued that it contains much more true material than the adherents of the unofficial story want us to believe. Nevertheless, in the light of OF and an unbiased analysis of OD, it cannot unthinkingly be accepted. Its over-simplified *form* is to be criticized. And this criticism inevitably leads to the riddle of Russell's forgetfulness. As I have argued in 2.6 and 7.3, this riddle cannot be solved unless the link with the paradox is taken into account. In the next, concluding subsection I shall tentatively discuss this issue.

25 The link with the paradox

25.1 The paradox in the official story and beyond it

According to the official story, the ToD is connected with the paradox or "contradiction", as Russell preferred to call it. It constituted the decisive achievement that helped him and Whitehead to find their way in elaborating the Ramified Theory of Types. The ToD is deemed to be more fundamental than the theory of types. Neither Russell nor Whitehead ever supposed it to be final. The young Wittgenstein admired the ToD but was very much dissatisfied with the theory of types. And the short-lived cooperation between the pupil and his master was based on the latter's willingness to admit that the proposed solution of the paradox was capable of improvement.¹⁵⁷

As seen from Russell's perspective, the ToD provided a model of a new attitude to realism. In this connection Meinong acts as icon of excessive realism, i.e., as a caricature of Russell's former self. He plays a symbolic role, comparable to those played by Don Juan, Socrates and Abraham in the philosophy of Kierkegaard. The ToD provides the matrix of an "eliminativistic

157 See Landini (2007).

approach”.¹⁵⁸ We can freely do *as if* we speak about a lot of things without really speaking about them, i.e., without assuming them to be real entities. The realm of what propositions are really about may be restricted without impairing our freedom of speech. The beloved notion of the unrestricted variable can be preserved. All entities are of the same type. All higher types consist of non-entities or constructions involved in being about entities. But the notion of entity is applied in a stricter way. For as a naïve realist, Russell supposed that whatever appears as something a proposition can be about, *must* be acknowledged as an entity. In this way propositions and collections or combinations of entities were all of them supposed to be entities. For even if they are many, they *can* be counted as *one*.

This approach inevitably involves reflexivity. For if propositions are entities, then a proposition about any entity is also about itself. Similarly, if denoting concepts are entities, then the denoting concept “any entity” is itself among the entities ambiguously denoted by it. If all collections are entities, then at least some collections contain themselves as an element, like the collection of all entities, the collection of all collections or the collection of all abstract entities, i.e., all entities that do not “exist”. Assuming with Frege, Russell and the young Wittgenstein that the paradox is due to reflexivity, a kind of eliminativistic programme based on enlightened realism is needed to solve it. The ToD paves the way of such an approach.

This, then, is the only link with the paradox put forward in the official story. In my opinion three other links are ignored. In the first place, Russell suggests that the ToD had been fully adopted *before* its possible usefulness in dealing with the paradox was discovered. In my opinion Russell finally accepted the ToD at least partly *because* of its usefulness but without being prepared to admit that he did so. The official link with the paradox is that ToD promoted its solution. The suppressed link with the paradox is that the desire to solve the paradox promoted its adoption. As far as I can see, this is the only possible explanation of the riddle of Russell’s forgetfulness.¹⁵⁹

His attitude was just a little bit too forward-looking. As explained in the previous subsection, the full adoption of the ToD coincided with turning away from denoting and what was connected with it. In doing so Russell ignored another remarkable link with the paradox: the problem of denoting on whose occasion he conceived the ToD was in fact discovered in the course of an earlier attempt to solve the paradox.¹⁶⁰ In POM Russell turns out to be very hopeful about his theory of denoting concepts. It constitutes the ray of light in the darkness caused by the ‘contradiction’. In POM §56, p.54 he says:

The whole theory of definition, of identity, of classes, of symbolism, and of the variable is wrapped up in the theory of denoting. The notion is a fundamental notion of logic, and in spite of its difficulties, it is quite essential to be as clear about it as possible.

Now, suppose that Russell had paid some more attention to the fact that the ToD originated from an unsuspected difficulty discovered in the course of an attempt to avoid the paradox. In that case he could have asked whether the curious problem of denoting is somehow allied to the problem he wanted to avoid above all. In this way a third ignored link with the paradox could have appeared to him: the connection consisting in a possible kinship between the problem discovered in OF §35 and the paradox. This may seem rather far-fetched. But in the next subsection I shall try to argue that Frege may help us to see the connection.

25.2 Frege's assistance in seeing an unsuspected link

Suppose that in October 1905 Russell had sent a letter to Frege containing an explanation of the last part of the GEA. Would Frege have brushed aside the "inextricable tangle"? I think he would have taken this matter just as seriously as that reported to him in Russell's famous letter of 16 June 1902.¹⁶¹ What is more, from Frege's perspective, there would have been a striking similarity between the two difficulties. They both have to do with reflexivity, whereas in principle reflexivity cannot be allowed in his logic. It is supposed to be inadmissible because it is at variance with the axiom of external difference.

Frege excludes all kinds of reflexivity, allowed in Russell's logic of POM. For example, according to the latter system, concepts can truly or falsely be applied to themselves. If in the proposition expressed by "Socrates is human", Socrates can be replaced by any entity whatever without impairing the unity of the proposition, then it makes sense to apply the predicate "human" to itself. According to Frege, this is impossible because a first-order concept can only be applied to what belongs to a lower type, namely an object.

In some way or other Russell's paradox has to do with reflexivity. How then could it intrude into Frege's system of logic? It could because Frege applied the principle of the distinction of the many sharers (in this case objects) from what they share (in this case a concept) somewhat less rigorously than he realized. For he more or less surreptitiously assumed that among all objects that could possibly fall under a concept, one is more intimately connected with the concept than all other objects are connected with it, namely the concept's

extension. The extension is *derived* from the concept. A one-to-one relation intimately connects them. They somehow share the same character. For the extension or value range shows how the concept behaves in the same way as a graph showing the character of the mathematical function represented by it.

There are at least two reasons why Frege needed this assumption. Firstly, he said that a concept could not be made an object without altering it. In other words: it can be made an object in altering it. Speaking about the concept *horse* we do not mention the concept itself, but instead an object. Which object? Not just an arbitrary object. Not just some individual horse either. We actually mention the concept's extension instead of the concept itself. Secondly, Frege needed extensions in order to carry out his logicist programme. In ordinary life numerals are primarily used "attributively", as Frege puts it. "Five" names a second-order predicate applicable to first-order concepts. But in arithmetic, "five" is used as proper name of an object, namely the number five. Which object? The extension of the said second-order predicate.

In adopting extensions Frege virtually adopted reflexivity. For the question may be legitimately asked whether an extension does or does not fall under the concept from which it is derived. On that account extensions may be divided in two kinds, say, reflexive and non-reflexive ones. And then we may ask whether the extension of the concept named "... is a non-reflexive extension" is itself reflexive or not. That, then, is the Fregean version of the paradox. But before receiving Russell's bad tidings, Frege was not aware of having allowed reflexivity. Very shortly after having realized this, he concluded that extensions are to be eliminated from logic and that therefore his life's work, the reduction of arithmetic to logic, was doomed to failure. Russell was very much impressed and surprised by this drastic conclusion.¹⁵⁸ But he could have been surprised by something else as well, namely that Frege remained faithful to the remaining part of his logic. The link between logic and arithmetic was irreparably damaged, but not logic itself. Quite to the contrary, Frege's logical system now was freed from something incompatible with its own principle: the presence of the one shared by many *in* one of the many sharing it. The axiom of external difference does not tolerate correspondence. For correspondence implies a subtle difference and a differentiated identity, i.e. an identity *in* different forms. A concept and its extension were surreptitiously supposed to correspond as different forms of one and the same character.

As seen from this perspective, there is a remarkable similarity with the problem concerning sense and reference. For just as Frege had illegitimately assumed that each concept is exclusively allied with one particular object,

158 See Russell (1959), chapter 7.

namely its extension, so he assumed that each sense is exclusively allied with one particular sense referring to it, namely the indirect sense. Just as the extension of a concept is supposed to be derived from the concept itself, so the indirect sense is supposed to be somehow derived from its reference.

In both cases an indirect form of reflexivity is introduced. Indeed a concept can never be applied to itself. But it can be applied to its extension. Similarly, a sense can never be referred to by itself, but it can be referred to by the indirect sense derived from it. In both cases the assumption is very natural indeed. Without them the ambiguity of natural language seems to be completely arbitrary and inexplicable. For the word “horse” cannot only be used as a predicate, but also to indicate the “species”, as Frege says, i.e., (according to him) the concept’s extension.¹⁵⁹ And the name “Morningstar” cannot only be used to name the Morningstar but also to name the sense expressed by it in its normal use.

However, Frege is so much concerned with *warning* the reader of the danger of confusing the different things that happen to have the same name in natural language, that he forgets to provide an explanation. And according to the principle of his own logic, it must be possible to give one, i.e., to reduce the connection to a partial overlap of the form A, versus AB, or AB versus AC.

Now suppose that Frege, having received Russell’s imaginary letter dated October 1905, had remarked the above-sketched similarity. How would he have reacted to it? As far as I can see, he would have been in a serious predicament, probably in a predicament even more serious than that of 1902. For now, it is not just an appendix of his logic that is jeopardized, but one of its essential distinctions, viz., that between proof-value and truth-value. But never would he have been prepared to give up his anti-psychologism. The laws of logic are not man-made. They are “anchored in an eternal ground, capable of being washed over, but not transferable”.¹⁶⁰

From this principle Frege could have concluded that his predicament is human. That is the counterpart of radical anti-psychologism. The realm studied by logicians is not problematic. Therefore logical problems are psychological or even existential. To be honest, I do not know at all whether Frege would have been prepared to draw this conclusion. Anyhow, I am prepared to do so. And I am convinced that it makes a great internal difference. For it amounts to the same as accepting that the real principles of logic need not perforce be evident to us and that what *seems* to be contradictory need not perforce *be* contradictory. This involves a radical

159 Frege (1882), p.92.

160 Frege (1893), p.XVI.

change in attitude towards Russell's paradox. For it means that, maybe, the so-called contradiction is not a real contradiction at all. In that case the problem is not to avoid it, but rather to see it in a different light: not as an enemy or wicked intruder, but as a gentle invitation to change our minds.

25.3 The spectre of solipsism

When Russell discovered the paradox on the occasion of his attempt to criticize Cantor's proof that there is no greatest cardinal number, he actually changed his mind. He concluded that in his revolt against his own former idealism, he had made a mistake. But he never questioned his view of the nature of that mistake. Russell assumed that in any event he had gone too far. He had been too tolerant in accepting all kinds of beings in his ontological universe. He supposed himself to have reached the absolute maximum of openness. In some way or other his universe had to become "less luxuriant". And eventually the ToD helped him to effectuate it with a minimum of violence.

In my opinion, Russell's initial realism was not open enough. One important "entity", namely being-in, was excluded. Consequently anything was welcome, save intimate contact between entities. His universe consisted of untouchables. The theory of denoting concepts was an attempt to introduce something like extra-mental intentionality. But Russell eventually turned his back on it and its problem. In saying this, I do not want to vindicate idealism. Quite the contrary. According to me, Russell identified being-in in general with being-in as it is conceived in idealism: as a one-sided suppressive relation of inferior or un-genuine beings to their superiors. In this respect his criticism of idealism was too soft. He shared with his opponent the tenet that the *unio mystica* of reciprocal being-in is to be kept outside logic and metaphysics.¹⁶¹

However, I cannot understand how universals can actually be universal, unless they are universal *in* something that is the same as that *in* which an individual instance is individual. It does not make sense to speak about an individual alone. For individual and universal are opposite sides of one and the same. Bucephalus may be called an individual, i.e., an individual *horse*. And a universal cannot be universal, unless its universality consists in something particular, for example: *horse*. Both Russell and Frege are prepared to admit the entities called "universals", but not their actually being universal. The spectre of solipsism haunts the logic of their metaphysics.

161 See 0.3.

In my opinion, this spectre of solipsism is nothing else but the axiom of external difference. It excludes reflexivity. For reflexivity is not possible unless one and the same acts differently, say, as subject and as object. Whoever writes an autobiography must act as both the writer and the one whose life is being described. If this difference is supposed to be outside the sameness, then the word “auto” does not mean anything at all. From an externalist perspective, reflexivity is suspicious or even impossible. It is supposed to be essentially vicious. If it happens to creep into a system of logic, this must be due to lack of rigor. That seems to be the message of the contradiction discovered by Russell. But if the axiom of external difference is abandoned, the situation appears in a completely different light. Then there is no reason at all for supposing reflexivity as such to be vicious.

25.4 A dialectical analysis of the paradox

Let us look at the most simple and classical version of the paradox. Epimenides the Cretan says that wherever and whenever something is said or will be said by Cretans, it is false. My very first reaction may be: “That sounds rather implausible. A community cannot use language and initiate their children in it unless its members allow themselves to say something true from time to time.” But Epimenides is disappointed. He has supposed me to be more intelligent. He has expected me to understand that his statement is not only implausible, but that it *cannot be true*. For if it were true, then its very truth would be a refutation of what he claims to be true. After some time, I understand this self-contradiction. But then he makes his second move. The moment I have conceded that what he says cannot be true, he wants me to believe that *therefore he is right*. But I protest. The fact that he is a Cretan saying something false does not prove that he does so because he is a Cretan. Moreover, the claim that you are right because you are wrong seems to be vicious.

Suppose I meet a friend who looks very depressed. He is a kind of champion in self-pity. He complains: “Whatever I say and whatever I do, it is always wrong.” Then I say: “Please do not exaggerate!” His reaction is “I told you, I am always wrong. For you, too, criticize me. In this very case I have been wrong again. That corroborates how terrible I am.” This then is the most elementary psychological version of the paradox. It seems to exemplify the very pinnacle of self-denial. But in fact it shows something else: the pinnacle of self-defence and self-righteousness. In philosophy it corresponds to the imaginary sceptic who supposes himself to be immune to criticism of others,

because he already has criticized himself.

According to Russell's Vicious Circle Principle, Epimenides is to be criticized for making a statement that is nonsensical as long as it purports to be reflexive. He can only say something about a totality of propositions provided his own statement is of a higher type. The same applies to excessive self-pity or to the imaginary sceptic.¹⁶² Russell's approach is based on the assumption that in all varieties of the paradox, reflexivity provides two equally contradictory alternatives. The assumption of truth leads to a contradiction and is therefore to be rejected. But the rejection of truth leads equally to a real contradiction and is therefore to be rejected as well. According to me, however, the latter assumption is not warranted at all. The inference from truth to falsity is valid; the inference from falsity or non-truth to truth is invalid.

Consider the following, extremely sophisticated version of Epimenides, namely the sentence:

Whatever the nature of this sentence may be, it does not express something true.

According to me, the assumption that this sentence actually does express something true, leads to a contradiction. Therefore it is to be rejected. But the assumption that it does not express something true is not to be rejected. It only implies the truth of what is expressed by the sentence "The above-mentioned sentence does not express something true". It does not imply the truth of the above-mentioned sentence itself. Truth cannot consist *in* its own denial. In other words, the crucial question is not whether there is reflexivity, but *in what* it consists.

This perspective may be generalized. Let us look at Grelling's paradox. Suppose all impeccably reflexive or "autological" words to be united in a very distinguished high society. Words like "word", "noun" or "polysyllabic" will certainly belong to its members. Suppose all impeccably unreflexive or "heterological" words such as "verb", "article" or "monosyllabic" to be united in an equally high society. Evidently a lot of words are excluded from both societies. For example, it is rather problematic to observe how interesting the word "interesting" is. Now suppose that the word "non-autological" wants to become a member of the autological society. Its selection committee does not like difficulties, let alone contradictions. Therefore "non-autological" is not accepted. The argument is as follows. If it were supposed to be acceptable, as truly applicable to itself, then its very being autological would consist in its

162 See Russell and Whitehead (1910), p.38.

non being truly applicable to itself.

But the word “non-autological” happens to be disappointed by this decision. It raises the objection that its very being refused, i.e., its being supposed to be non-autological, is an excellent reason for being accepted as autological. So it claims to be qualified *because* it is rejected. In my opinion this is essentially the same strategy as the one displayed by Epimenides. Therefore, the selection committee is right. “Non-autological” is not autological, but that only *seems* to be a reason for accepting it as autological.

Russell never discussed Grelling’s paradox. If he had done so, he would have been in a predicament. For it is far from easy to explain why the possible reflexivity of words is vicious. As far as sets or “collections” are concerned, the Vicious Circle Principle may seem to be more convincing. Actually it is as far as sets are extensionally defined, i.e., by means of enumeration. Evidently a vicious circle is involved if I define a set S in saying: it has three members, namely the number 3, the number 17 and the set S. But the set of words deserving to be called nouns is defined by intension. Therefore the question may be legitimately raised as to whether the word “noun” itself belongs to that class. The answer is: yes. As soon as collections are defined intensionally, i.e., by means of a concept, the question can be raised of whether its defining concept can truly be applied to it. If so, the collection may be called reflexive. Then it is reflexive *in* something. Thus, just as the reflexivity of the word “noun” consists in its itself being a noun, so in my opinion the reflexivity of the collection of all collections consists in itself being a collection.

But from this tolerant approach it by no means follows that all possible defining concepts are such that a collection can be reflexive or unreflexive *in* it. For although a collection may be defined by the class concept “non-reflexive collection”, that in itself is not sufficient for qualifying that concept as something in which a collection may be reflexive. Therefore, the approach I advocate in case of the original version of Russell’s paradox is essentially the same as the one I have argued for in view of other, more elementary versions. The collection of all non-reflexive collections is not reflexive, but that is no reason at all for supposing that therefore it must be reflexive. For being non-reflexive simply does not belong to the things in which a collection can be reflexive.

In natural language, words like “re”, “auto”, or “self” mark reflexivity. These words *mean* a repetition of the same in different positions without *showing* it. In symbolism, however, reflexivity can only be expressed by means of an actual repetition of the same symbol in different positions. If the use of symbolism is allied with the belief in the axiom of external differences, then the difference in position cannot be supposed to touch what is the same. In this way both

the advantage of symbolism and the meaning of natural language are obscured. A formula of the form “aRa” is supposed to be equivalent to something like $F(a)$. Reflexivity and that in which a collection may be reflexive are lumped together.

If these sketchy remarks are right, then Russell’s paradox is not to be construed as an enemy of Platonic realism, but as an invitation to abandon externalism. Viewed in this way, Russell’s original attempt to criticize Cantor by proving that there must be a greatest cardinal number is far less ridiculous or unscientific than he afterwards made himself believe. Cantor’s proof only works as long as an external procedure is available, which determines *in what* the elements of a set are reflexive or unreflexive. But as soon as the proof is applied to Russell’s collection of all entities which themselves are collections, then the need of an external procedure has disappeared. Russell cannot make use of any other procedure than attributing any collection to itself. Then the answer to the question of whether a certain collection is, or is not, a member of the collection attributed to it, is independent of the procedure. The answer is up to the collection itself. Is it reflexive or not? According to Cantor, at least one collection must be forgotten, namely the infamous collection of all non-reflexive collections. But Russell did not forget this case. However, Cantor asks whether it is reflexive. According to me, Russell could have answered that it is not, because in absence of an external procedure, the possible reason for being reflexive is relegated to the defining concept. But the defining concept “non-reflexive collection” is incapable of acting as something in which a collection may be reflexive or unreflexive.

25.5 Conclusion: the problem of denoting as Russell’s second paradox

In isolation, this view on the nature of the paradox is, maybe, somewhat too sketchy and too unorthodox to be convincing. But it is supported by the analysis of the GEA explained in the previous chapter. The main aim of my approach has been: making the text intelligible in paying attention to its historical context. The result of the proposed analysis has been: that the GEA’s importance cannot be understood unless the axiom of external difference is taken into account. In the GEA Russell more consistently accepts its consequences than he ever had done before. He proves that the reflexivity required by denoting, or “determining”, as Frege would prefer to say, is incompatible with externalism. For it involves the subtle difference between C and “C” or between a sense and the indirect sense derived from it. But according to externalism, there cannot be opposed versions or forms

of one and the same. Something cannot differ from itself. It can only differ from something else. As seen from an externalist point of view, the reflexivity involved by the all-embracing character of being-denoted or being referred to is to be eliminated. In this way the later Vicious Circle Principle is heralded.

But the analysis provided in this study is based on challenging the validity of the axiom of external difference. Seen from that perspective the real problem discussed in the GEA differs from what it seems to be. The whole argument is to be turned inside out. The real problem is not denoting or reflexivity, but externalism. The very same approach can also be applied to the paradox. The real problem is not collections or concepts and their extensions, nor reflexivity, but the principle incompatible with them, namely externalism. Therefore, the problem discussed in the GEA deserves to be called Russell's second paradox.

Russell's full adoption of the ToD is allied with the rise of his official story. And the latter is the outcome of his attempt to forget his second paradox in order to solve his first one. In this way he wronged both the nature of the two problems and their kinship. What is more, he also wronged the power of his criticism of Frege and his own exceptional power to detect unsuspected logical difficulties. The rise of the official story marks the point of no return in Russell's philosophical development: no return to the deep metaphysical issues he once was involved in and equally no return to the Platonic love of mathematics he once lived through. At the age of eighty-seven, he wrote:

Mathematics has ceased to seem to me non-human in its subject-matter. I have come to believe, though very reluctantly, that it consists of tautologies. I fear that, to a mind of sufficient intellectual power, the whole of mathematics would appear trivial, as trivial as the statement that a four-footed animal is an animal. I think that the timelessness of mathematics has none of the sublimity that it once seemed to me to have, but consists merely in the fact that the pure mathematician is not talking about time. I cannot any longer find any mystical satisfaction in the contemplation of mathematical truth.

The aesthetic pleasure to be derived from an elegant piece of mathematical reasoning remains. But here, too, there were disappointments. The solution of the contradictions mentioned in an earlier chapter seemed to be only possible by adopting theories which might be true but were not beautiful. I felt about the contradictions much as an earnest Catholic must feel about wicked Popes.¹⁶³

163 Russell (1959), chapter 17 entitled "The Retreat from Pythagoras", p. 155.

I admire the heroic courage of Russell's honesty, I admire his reluctance, but I am unable to admire what he reluctantly did. For in my opinion "feeling about the contradictions much as an earnest Catholic must feel about wicked Popes" cannot and need not be justified. The whole drama is just as tautological as Russell eventually supposed mathematics to be. Its unhappy ending is the outcome of a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is the fulfilment of the belief with which the story started: the belief that the paradox is an enemy of a Platonic love of mathematics.

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Summary

During the last decades, a growing number of analytical philosophers have started to study the genesis of the school to which they belong. This thesis is an attempt to contribute to this salutary development, but from a different point of view, namely from the point of view of someone who once moved from continental (Hegelian) towards analytical philosophy, but eventually refused to become its adherent. The critical distance that distinguishes the approach of this study is marked by the predicate “dialectical” added to “analysis”. It indicates a minimal residue of Hegelianism: Hegelianism without hierarchy, without idealism and without the belief in “inevitable contradictions”. What remains of it is only the conviction that oppositions are of universal, i.e., of existential, historical and logical importance, in spite of the fact that for us, human beings, it is difficult both to understand them and to acknowledge this very difficulty.

This point of view purports to lie beyond the schism between the analytical and continental traditions. For it opposes a presupposition unconsciously shared by the two movements, namely that oppositions, if they are real at all, are outside the scope of logic. Contemporary continental philosophers are prepared to accept the importance of oppositions and of irreducible two-sidedness, as in the much-discussed case of “intentionality”. But they are prone to believing that what really matters in human life, cannot fall within the scope of logic. Analytical philosophers, being prepared to accept logic’s universality, are prone to ignoring the very possibility of oppositions.

In this study no elaborate theory of oppositions is provided, but only the elementary maxim that, as such, oppositions must have something in common. They are to be construed as contrasting forms of one and the same: not as A versus B or AC versus BC, but rather as AB versus BA. The difference cannot be outside of what is the same. The above-mentioned analytical ignorance of the very possibility of oppositions consists in assuming that, on pain of contradiction, identity must be construed as absolute. Difference cannot intrude *into* what is the same. In other words: nothing can differ from itself or be outside itself. When something differs from something, it must be something else.

Being the principle of un-dialectical analysis, this *Axiom of External Difference* constitutes the main target of my criticism. I reject it as an illusion, but I fully acknowledge its importance as an existentially deep-rooted illusion. I admire philosophers like Frege and Russell, who have seriously tried to elaborate this axiom consistently. This thesis is an attempt to prove the logical and historical fertility of a “dialectical analysis” in applying it to a little, but

vexed and much-discussed piece of the history of early analytical philosophy: the most obscure passage occurring in Bertrand Russell's famous article *On Denoting* (OD), the passage containing the so-called *Gray's Elegy Argument* (GEA).

OD is famous because it is the very first public appearance of the theory that was later named the *Theory of Descriptions* (ToD). In OD the then nameless theory is put forward as a new theory of denoting. Russell's own former theory of denoting concepts (mainly explained in the *Principles of Mathematics*, Chapter V) and Frege's theory of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, are treated as variants of essentially one and the same old theory. It is subjected to criticism in two different arguments. Most famous and most conspicuous is the argument concerning propositions in whose verbal expression a vacuous denoting phrase, like "the present King of France", occurs. In the *King of France Argument* (KFA), the views of Meinong and Frege are jointly discussed. The other argument, the GEA, is concerned with an issue in which Meinong does not play any role. The question at stake is: how can the supposed meaning of an unambiguously denoting phrase occur as the subject of a proposition?

In his autobiographical accounts, Russell stressed the importance of the ToD. Its rise marks the second great salutary turning point in his philosophical development. It enabled him to mitigate the excessive realism that resulted from his revolt against his own former idealism. As such, it also helped him to cope with the paradox or "contradiction", discovered shortly after that revolt. In this connection, Russell mentions OD, but not the GEA. Quite the contrary, he declared: "...the desire to avoid Meinong's unduly populous realm of being led me to the theory of descriptions."

From this statement it has generally be inferred that the GEA does not have anything to do with the ToD's *genesis*. It seemed to be an additional argument, conceived afterwards in order to defend the new theory against the old one. Construed in this way, it has been extensively discussed by a lot of analytic philosophers, among them distinguished proponents such as Church, Carnap, Searle, Geach, Dummett, Ayer and Hochberg. Their rather heated controversies belong to the first main phase of the GEA's reception, the period from 1943 to 1980. These discussions were dominated by a crucial cluster of questions. For the sake of brevity, I shall call it the *Russell-Frege question*: Can the GEA be construed as a sound criticism of Frege? Or can it only be applied to Russell's own theory? How fundamental are the differences between these two theories? Did Russell misunderstand these differences and did his possible misunderstanding impair the validity of the GEA as criticism of Frege?

From 1980 onwards, both the issue itself and the atmosphere of the

discussion considerably changed. It became less heated and more historical. In that year Coffa discovered the manuscript *On Fundamentals* (OF), written shortly before OD. In it a passage occurs which, at least partly, strikingly resembles the GEA. Immediately after that passage, the ToD is first introduced. And importantly, in OF, neither Meinong nor the un-Meinongian Frege are discussed. In short: the GEA now began to appear to have been of unsuspected importance to the true *genesis* of the ToD, and Russell's official autobiographical story proved to be unreliable.

Because of this finding, commentators have concluded that the official account is to be replaced by a new, *unofficial* story. According to it, Russell was not led to the ToD by the supposed "desire to avoid Meinong's unduly populous realm of being", but, instead, by the desire to avoid the purely Russellian problem of denoting discovered in OF and later discussed in the GEA. Whoever wants to understand OD and the enigmatic GEA occurring in it, must, according to this unofficial story, forget the later Russell and focus on what has preceded OD. Evidently, neither Meinong nor Frege have thus played any role in the ToD's genesis. Indeed, OD contains criticism of both, but that merely belongs to the *defence* of a previously conceived and adopted theory.

In the present dissertation, the *aim* of the unofficial story, which is to criticize Russell's official account by means of evidence derived from OF, is fully embraced. But the unofficial story *itself* is rejected. The most elementary opposition, which is ignored by its adherents, is the opposition in which they themselves are involved. Impressed by the implacable outer appearance of their own criticism (the official story is deemed to be *completely* false), they have failed to see its inner weakness. In fact, their view has much more in common with the official story than they realize, because two essential and contestable assumptions are uncritically adopted: A) that there is no need to distinguish the ToD's *conception* from its *acceptance* and B) that there is no need to mention *Frege*.

The commentators have counterbalanced their lack of criticism by attributing a kind of magical and almost exclusive importance to OF. In doing so, they have prevented themselves from acknowledging its real importance and from comparing it with OD and with later expositions of the ToD. They supposed OD to be written *after* the ToD's full adoption, whereas, at least according to the present thesis, it has been written *before* it.

In *Part One* of this thesis, OF and other evidence is used in order to refute dogma A. The problem of denoting discovered in OF occasioned Russell to *conceive* the ToD, but it appears to have prevented him from accepting it. In *Part Two*, OF and other evidence is used in order to refute dogma B. In this

way, the old Russell-Frege question is approached from a new perspective. Along the road towards the ToD's conception, Frege *did* play a role of crucial importance. Along the road towards its adoption, he has in fact played a remarkable, but rather problematic role. It is not by accident that in the official story, *both* the problem discussed in the GEA *and* Frege are forgotten.

In *Chapter I*, two oppositions, both ignored by the proponents of the unofficial story, are discussed. The first opposition is constituted by the formal difference between the KFA and the GEA. The former argument purports to be of “imperative” importance in favour of the ToD, whereas the problem discussed in the latter is introduced as “curious”, i.e., as more or less inexplicable. This contrast has disturbed the straightforwardness of OD's composition. In OD much more actually happens than what is announced in its paragraph 3.

The second opposition discussed in Chapter I consists in the conflict between the official story and the true genesis of the ToD. Although, of course, the adherents of the unofficial story did not fail to see the existence of this conflict, they failed to understand its nature. They wrongly supposed it to lie *outside* the true history. They simply treated Russell as an unreliable Russell scholar, whereas in fact, he is the history's very protagonist.

In *Chapter II*, an attempt is made to lay bare the kernel of truth contained in Russell's official account. Indeed, Meinong did not play any role in the ToD's *conception*, but Russell's discovery, made after the completion of OF and before the final composition of OD, that the new theory throws a new light on the Meinongian problem of non-being, greatly contributed to the ToD's *adoption*. The crux of the KFA may be summarized as follows: The opposition between Meinong (or rather the quasi-Meinongian Russell) and Frege (or rather the Russell who by means of a quasi-Fregean move turned away from his former quasi-Meinongianism) is based on an apparently unavoidable presupposition they share. It may be stated thus: *If* a sentence in which, say, “Zeus” occurs does express something true or false, *then* “Zeus” (irrespective of whether the word is construed as a proper name or as a denoting phrase in disguise) *must* stand for something that the proposition expressed by that sentence is *about*. This presupposition, which may be called “crypto-Meinongianism”, is actually avoided by the ToD.

In *Chapter III*, the opening chapter of *Part Two*, an attempt is made to reconstruct the role played by Frege in the genesis of the GEA. As to the question discussed in it, namely the question of how the meaning of a denoting

phrase may occur as subject of a proposition, Russell started with the innocent view expressed in *Principles* §56: if we wish to speak about the denoting concept itself, “we have to indicate the fact by italics or inverted commas”. In *Principles* §476 this outlook is clearly distinguished from the Fregean principle that a *Sinn* can only become the subject of a proposition, if it is indicated by another *Sinn*. In OF, p.363, a passage preceding the one that corresponds to the GEA, Russell appears to have integrated this “important” Fregean principle into his own theory of denoting concepts. In the crucial passage OF §35 the insufficiency of this quasi-Fregean view is discovered.

This, then, is one of the clues without which, according to the present thesis, the GEA cannot be understood. Another, equally essential, clue consists in asking and answering the question why the discovery made in OF §35 is surprising and important. The answer provided in Chapter III is, that in fact Russell discovered the incompatibility of the Axiom of External Difference with denoting.

In *Chapter IV* these two clues are used in order to analyse the GEA itself, taking into due account similarities and dissimilarities between the text and the passage in OF corresponding to it. In this connection, a third clue is laid bare, namely that the structure of the GEA (which is much more straightforward than the puzzling structure of OD as a whole) is marked by the sentence “This happens as follows”. It indicates the division between two opposed forms of one and the same problem: its general description and its actual illustration. Any sound exegesis must be such that the supposed description and the supposed happening correspond with one another.

The outcome of this approach is rather unorthodox. The GEA culminates in a criticism of what is left of the quasi-Fregean view, once its Russellian embodiment has been abandoned. Not the GEA as a whole can be applied to Frege, but only its last part. However, that part is more cogent than the part that can be applied to Russell. For an appeal to special kinds of occurrences is more alien to the nature of Frege’s logic than to the nature of Russell’s logic.

The concluding *Chapter V* deals with the role played, and not played, in the process terminating in the ToD’s adoption by the “fundamental Frege”, i.e., the Frege who holds ideas *presupposed* in his theory of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. In OF §§56-57, this Frege actually appears on the scene. In order to prepare the exegesis of this rather puzzling passage, three elements, constituting its environment, are discussed. The first element consists in what happens in the preceding passage: Russell’s conception of the ToD and his discovery that it is not viable unless a fresh view of the variable is developed, namely

a view in which the variable is not any longer assumed to presuppose the denoting concept “any entity”. The second element consists in the limitation of Russell’s perception, which is due to his misconception of this own fundamental difference with Frege. Of course, the nature and seriousness of that misconception cannot be fathomed unless an attempt is made to explore a third element as well, namely this fundamental difference itself.

These investigations lead to the conclusion that Frege’s assistance in reshaping Russell’s view of the variable is just as problematic as the resulting view itself. Furthermore, the part Russell actually allowed Frege to play in OD is much more limited than it could have been. Frege could have been honoured as the precursor of the new theory of *indefinite* descriptions. Finally, neither the difference between Russell and Frege, nor Russell’s having partially misconstrued it, does impair the validity of the GEA as applied to Frege.

However, Russell was not prepared to fully acknowledge what, according to the present thesis, constitutes the importance of the GEA, namely its disproving of the logical validity of the Axiom of External Difference. In his opinion, the GEA disproves the logical possibility of denoting. And the variable seems to presuppose denoting. Therefore, if the ToD is to be adopted, the best way of doing so is, by forgetting both denoting and Frege altogether. This is exactly what happened in the final acceptance of the ToD and in the official story about its genesis.

According to the present analysis, Russell actually decided to fully embrace the ToD as soon as he realized its possible assistance in coping with the paradox. But if the “problem of denoting” is construed in the way just sketched, as basically a problem of externalism, then the same procedure may be applied to the paradox. What seems to be a “problem of reflexivity” essentially is another variant of the problem of externalism. In this way an unsuspected kinship between the two problems can be laid bare. That is why the problem discussed in the GEA deserves to be called *Russell’s second paradox*.

Samenvatting

Hoewel analytische filosofen van huis uit niet zo historisch ingesteld plachten te zijn, valt er in de laatste decennia onder hen een groeiende belangstelling te constateren voor de ontstaansgeschiedenis van de stroming waartoe ze zelf behoren. Aan deze reflexieve wending, die onvermijdelijk kritische distantie vereist, hoopt deze dissertatie iets bij te dragen, maar vanuit de andere kant: vanuit het perspectief van iemand die met kritische distantie begonnen is, iemand die zich ooit vanuit zijn continentale (Hegeliaanse) achtergrond in de richting van de analytische filosofie heeft bewogen, die daar weerstand en inspiratie gezocht en gevonden heeft, maar die uiteindelijk geweigerd heeft een aanhanger van die stroming te worden. De kritische distantie waardoor de in dit proefschrift gevolgde benaderingswijze zich onderscheidt van de onder analytische filosofen gangbare, is gemarkeerd door het woord “dialectisch” aan het woord “analyse” toe te voegen. Ik heb het gebruikt om een minimale rest van Hegelianisme aan te duiden: Hegelianisme zonder hiërarchie, zonder idealisme en zonder het geloof in “onvermijdelijke tegenspraken”. Wat er van overblijft, is alleen maar de overtuiging dat tegenstellingen van universeel, d.w.z. existentieel, historisch en logisch belang zijn, ondanks het feit dat het ons, mensen, moeilijk valt ze te begrijpen en die moeite te erkennen.

Dit gezichtspunt pretendeert aan gene zijde te staan van de kloof die de continentale van de analytische filosofie scheidt. Want ik keer mij tegen een vooronderstelling die onbewust gedeeld wordt door beide stromingen en die volgens mij aan hun tegenstelling ten grondslag ligt, te weten dat tegenstellingen, als ze reëel zijn, buiten het bestek vallen van de logica. Hedendaagse continentale filosofen zijn bereid het belang van tegenstellingen en van onherleidbare tweezijdigheid (denk aan het geval van de veelbesproken “intentionaliteit”) te erkennen. Maar ze zijn geneigd te geloven dat wat écht van belang is in het menselijk leven, buiten het bereik van de logica moet liggen. Analytische filosofen redeneren andersom: omdat ze bereid zijn de universaliteit van de logica te erkennen, voelen ze zich gedwongen de logische mogelijkheid van tegenstellingen te ontkennen.

Deze dissertatie verschaft geen uitgewerkte theorie over tegenstellingen, maar slechts de elementaire richtlijn dat tegenpolen als zodanig iets met elkaar gemeen moeten hebben. Ze moeten als contrasterende vormen van één en hetzelfde worden opgevat: niet als A versus B, of AC versus BC, maar eerder als AB versus BA. Het verschil kan niet gelegen zijn buiten datgene wat hetzelfde is. De hierboven genoemde, onder analytische filosofen gangbare miskenning van de mogelijkheid van tegenstellingen, bestaat in de aanname, dat, op straffe van tegenspraak, identiteit absoluut moet worden opgevat: Niets kan van

zichzelf verschillen of buiten zichzelf zijn. Als iets van iets verschilt, moet het iets anders zijn.

Omdat dit *axioma van uitwendig verschil* het principe is waarop een ondialectische analyse is gebaseerd, ligt daar het voornaamste doelwit van mijn kritiek. Ik verwerp het als een illusie, maar ik erken en bewonder de anti-psychologistische en anti-idealistische motieven van waaruit grondleggers van de analytische filosofie, zoals Frege en Russell, ertoe gekomen zijn dit axioma te omarmen. Deze dissertatie is een poging de vruchtbaarheid van een “dialectische analyse” aan te tonen door die toe te passen op een geducht en veelbesproken stukje uit de geschiedenis van de vroege analytische filosofie: de meest duistere passage die voorkomt in Bertrand Russell’s beroemde, in 1905 verschenen artikel *On Denoting* (OD), de passage waarin het zogenaamde Gray’s *Elegy Argument* (GEA) wordt uiteengezet.

OD is beroemd omdat het de allereerste openbare verschijning is van de theorie die later als *Theory of Descriptions* (ToD) bekend is geworden. In OD wordt de dan nog naamloze theorie naar voren gebracht als een nieuwe theorie over *denoting* (verwijzing). Russells eigen voormalige theorie over *denoting concepts* (verwijzende begrippen), hoofdzakelijk uiteengezet in *The Principles of Mathematics*, hoofdstuk V en Frege’s theorie over *Sinn* en *Bedeutung* worden in OD behandeld als varianten van één en dezelfde oude theorie. Die wordt aan kritiek onderworpen in twee verschillende argumenten. Het meest beroemd en opvallend is de argumentatie die betrekking heeft op proposities uitgedrukt door volzinnen waarin een loze verwijzende frase, zoals “de huidige koning van Frankrijk” voorkomt. In dit *King of France Argument* (KFA), worden de opvattingen van Meinong en Frege *samen* besproken. Het tweede argument, het GEA, heeft te doen met een kwestie waarin Meinong geen enkele rol speelt. Het punt waar het om gaat is: Hoe kan de vooronderstelde betekenis (*meaning*) van een eenduidig verwijzende frase, zoals “de eerste regel van Gray’s Elegie”, als thema van een propositie voorkomen?

In zijn autobiografische uiteenzettingen heeft Russell het belang van de ToD voor zijn ontwikkeling als volgt geschetst: Het ontstaan van die theorie markeert de tweede grote heilzame ommekeer in zijn filosofische ontwikkelingsgang. Die theorie stelde hem in staat het overmatige realisme af te zwakken dat uit zijn eerste heilzame ommekeer, de in 1898 begonnen revolte tegen zijn eigen vroegere idealisme, was voortgekomen. In die hoedanigheid hielp de ToD hem ook om in het reine te komen met de paradox of “contradictie” die Russell kort na die revolte, in 1901, ontdekt had. In die autobiografische uiteenzettingen wordt OD soms genoemd (bij voorbeeld in *My Philosophical Development* (1959), hoofdstuk 7), maar het GEA *nooit*.

Integendeel, in *My Mental Development* (1944) heeft Russell gezegd: “....het verlangen Meinongs overbevolkte rijk van zijnden te vermijden, bracht me tot de *theory of descriptions*.”.

Uit deze woorden is de algemeen verbreide opvatting voortgekomen, dat het GEA niets te maken heeft met de ontstaansgeschiedenis van de ToD. Het leek een extra argument te zijn dat later bedacht is om de nieuwe theorie tegen de aanspraken van de gevestigde zienswijze te verdedigen. Een aanzienlijk aantal analytische filosofen, onder wie beroemdheden zoals Church, Carnap, Searle, Geach, Dummett, Ayer en Hochberg, heeft het aldus opgevatte GEA uitgebreid besproken. Hun nogal verhitte onenigheden behoren tot de eerste hoofdperiode van de receptie van het GEA, de periode van 1943, het jaar waarin Church met zijn commentaar de discussie op gang bracht, tot 1980, het jaar waarin het gezag van Russells officiële verhaal voor het eerst ter discussie werd gesteld. De controverses in dit tijdvak worden beheerst door één cruciaal cluster van vragen. Voor het gemak noem ik het de *Russell-Frege kwestie*: Kan het GEA worden gelezen als een steekhoudende kritiek op Frege? Of is het alleen maar van toepassing op Russells eigen theorie? Hoe fundamenteel zijn hun verschillen? Heeft Russell die verkeerd begrepen? En heeft zijn eventuele misverstand afbreuk gedaan aan de geldigheid van het GEA opgevat als kritiek op Frege?

Vanaf 1980 zijn zowel het thema als de stemming van de discussie aanzienlijk veranderd. De stemming werd minder verhit en het thema meer historisch. In dat jaar ontdekte Coffa het manuscript *On Fundamentals* (OF), geschreven kort voor OD. In dat manuscript komt een passage voor die minstens ten dele opvallend met het GEA overeenstemt. Direct na die passage wordt de ToD geconcipieerd. In OF wordt noch over Meinong gerept, noch over Frege als zijn tegenpool. Kortom: het GEA bleek opeens van onverwacht belang te zijn voor de ware *ontstaansgeschiedenis* van de ToD. Bovendien bleek Russells autobiografische schets onbetrouwbaar te zijn.

Uit deze vondst hebben de commentatoren de conclusie getrokken dat het officiële verhaal vervangen moet worden door een nieuw, onofficieel verhaal. Niet “het verlangen Meinongs overbevolkte rijk van zijnden te vermijden” bracht Russell tot de ToD, maar in plaats daarvan het verlangen iets anders te vermijden, namelijk het puur Russelliaanse probleem van *denoting* dat hij in OF had ontdekt en in het GEA opnieuw had besproken. Wie OD wil begrijpen, en vooral het raadselachtige GEA dat daarin voorkomt, moet, volgens het onofficiële verhaal, de latere Russell vergeten en zich concentreren op wat aan OD voorafging. Kennelijk heeft noch Meinong noch Frege een rol gespeeld in de ontstaansgeschiedenis van de ToD. Natuurlijk valt, ook volgens de aanhangers van deze zienswijze, niet te ontkennen dat Meinong en Frege beiden

in OD worden bekritiseerd. Maar die kritiek hoort volgens hen thuis in de *verdediging* van een al eerder geconcipieerde en aangenomen theorie.

In dit proefschrift wordt het *doel* van het onofficiële verhaal volledig erkend, namelijk Russells officiële verhaal bekritisieren met behulp van bewijsmateriaal dat aan OF ontleend is. Maar het onofficiële verhaal *zelf* wordt in dit proefschrift verworpen. De meest elementaire tegenstelling die door de aanhangers van deze opvatting wordt veronachtzaamd, is de tegenstelling waarin ze zelf betrokken zijn. Onder de indruk van de onverbiddelijke uiterlijke verschijning van hun eigen kritiek (het officiële verhaal zou *totaal* verkeerd zijn) vergeten ze oog te hebben voor de toegeeflijkheid die daar achter schuilgaat. In feite heeft hun visie veel meer gemeen met het officiële verhaal dan ze beseffen. Twee essentiële en aanvechtbare vooronderstellingen worden kritiekloos overgenomen: A) dat het niet nodig is de *conceptie* van de ToD te onderscheiden van haar *acceptatie* en B) dat het niet nodig is *Frege* te noemen.

In het *eerste deel* van dit proefschrift wordt OF samen met ander bewijsmateriaal gebruikt om dogma A te weerleggen. Naar aanleiding van het probleem dat Russell in OF ontdekt heeft, is de ToD *geconcipieerd*. Maar uit OF blijkt ondubbelzinnig dat datzelfde probleem hem ervan weerhield de ToD zonder meer te *accepteren*. Het probleem bleek sterker en universeler te zijn dan de oplossing die de ToD te bieden had. In het *tweede deel* wordt OF samen met andere bronnen gebruikt om dogma B te ontkrachten, zodat aldus een nieuw licht geworpen kan worden op de aloude Russell-Frege kwestie: Frege heeft wel degelijk een cruciale rol gespeeld in het proces dat tot de *conceptie* van de ToD geleid heeft. En in het proces naar de uiteindelijke *acceptatie* van de ToD heeft hij een opmerkelijk, maar nogal problematisch aandeel gehad. Het is bepaald niet toevallig dat in het officiële verhaal Frege *samen* met het GEA vergeten wordt.

In *hoofdstuk I* worden twee tegenstellingen besproken die beide door de aanhangers van het onofficiële verhaal verwaarloosd zijn. De eerste tegenstelling is gelegen in het formele verschil tussen het KFA en het GEA. Afgezien van hun evidente inhoudelijke verschil valt er in OD een verschil te bespeuren in wat deze argumenten *pretenderen* te bewijzen. Het eerstgenoemde argument pretendeert “dwingend” te zijn ten gunste van de ToD, terwijl het probleem besproken in het laatstgenoemde argument wordt ingeleid als zijnde “nogal vreemd”, d.w.z. min of meer onverklaarbaar. Dit contrast heeft de rechtlijnigheid en doorzichtigheid van de structuur van OD verstoord. In de tekst gebeurt heel wat meer dan in de derde alinea op onschuldige toon wordt aangekondigd. Dat het KFA, oftewel de kritische discussie behorende bij puzzel

(3), in een apart deel naar voren is geschoven, is geheel te danken aan de door Russell ongenoemde extra legitimerende kracht die hij aan dat argument toekent.

De tweede in hoofdstuk I besproken tegenstelling betreft het conflict tussen het officiële verhaal en de ware ontstaansgeschiedenis van de ToD. Hoewel de aanhangers van het onofficiële verhaal het bestaan van dit conflict uiteraard niet over het hoofd hebben gezien, hebben ze wel de aard ervan verkeerd begrepen. Ze hebben ten onrechte aangenomen dat die tegenstelling *buiten* de echte geschiedenis gelegen is. Ze hebben Russell gewoonweg behandeld als een onbetrouwbare Russell deskundige, terwijl hij in feite de hoofdpersoon is van het drama!

In *hoofdstuk II* wordt een poging gedaan de kern van waarheid bloot te leggen die vervat is in Russells officiële verhaal. Inderdaad, Meinong heeft, zoals de aanhangers van het onofficiële verhaal maar al te graag benadrukken, geen enkele rol gespeeld in de *conceptie* van de ToD, maar wel degelijk in haar *acceptatie*. Want Russells ontdekking, gedaan na de voltooiing van OF en voor de definitieve compositie van OD, dat de ToD een nieuw licht werpt op het Meinongiaanse probleem van het niet-zijnde, heeft daaraan flink wat bijgedragen. De clou van het KFA kan als volgt worden samengevat: De tegenstelling tussen Meinong (of eigenlijk de quasi-Meinongiaanse Russell) en Frege (of eigenlijk de Russell die zich met behulp van een quasi-Fregeaanse manoeuvre van zijn voormalige quasi-Meinongianisme had afgekeerd) is gebaseerd op een ogenschijnlijk onvermijdelijke vooronderstelling die ze met elkaar gemeen hebben. Die vooronderstelling kan als volgt worden weergegeven. Als een volzin waarin, zeg, “Zeus” voorkomt, iets waars of onwaars uitdrukt, dan *moet* “Zeus” (ongeacht of die uitdrukking nu als eigennaam wordt opgevat dan wel als verkapte descriptie) staan voor iets *waarover* de door die volzin uitgedrukte propositie handelt. De extra legitimerende kracht van het KFA berust op Russells ontdekking dat deze aanname, die als “crypto-Meinongianisme” te betitelen is, door de ToD vermeden kan worden.

In *hoofdstuk III* wordt het tweede deel van deze dissertatie geopend met een poging de rol te reconstrueren die Frege in de ontstaansgeschiedenis van het GEA gespeeld heeft. Ten aanzien van de vraag die in het GEA centraal staat, de vraag hoe de betekenis van een eenduidig verwijzende frase als thema van een propositie kan voorkomen, heeft Russell aanvankelijk de onschuldige opvatting gehuldigd die in *Principles* §56 naar voren komt: “Als we willen spreken over het verwijzende begrip zelf, “dan moet dat worden aangegeven door van cursivering of aanhalingstekens gebruik te maken.” In *Principles* §476

wordt deze zienswijze duidelijk onderscheiden van het Fregeaanse beginsel dat een *Sinn* alleen maar tot thema van een propositie kan worden, wanneer daarnaar middels een andere *Sinn* verwezen wordt. In OF, p.363, een stuk van de tekst dat voorafgaat aan de cruciale, met het GEA corresponderende passage, blijkt Russell dit aldaar door hem als “belangrijk” betitelde Fregeaanse beginsel in zijn eigen theorie van *denoting concepts* ingelijfd te hebben. In de cruciale passage (OF §35) wordt dan vervolgens het fiasco van *deze* semi-Fregeaanse zienswijze ontdekt. Dat is dan één van de sleutels zonder welke volgens dit proefschrift het GEA niet ontcijferd kan worden: het eerste standpunt dat daar in alinea D aan kritiek wordt onderworpen, is noch puur Russelliaans, noch puur Fregeaans, maar *quasi-Fregeaans*.

Maar waarom meende Russell Freges hulp nodig te hebben? Wat was er mis met de onschuldige, in *Principles* §56 gehuldigde opvatting? Daar wordt in feite een beroep gedaan op een verandering van *rol* zonder een verandering van *positie*, terwijl dat volgens het in §49 gehuldigde externalisme onmogelijk zou moeten zijn. Dat is dan de tweede sleutel zonder welke volgens dit proefschrift het GEA niet ontcijferd kan worden: de rol van het *axioma van uitwendige verschillen* dient als zodanig onderkend te worden.

Wat Russell in OF §35 ontdekte en in een iets gewijzigde vorm in het GEA heeft uiteengezet, is, zo wordt in *Hoofdstuk IV* uiteengezet, simpelweg, dat niet alleen zijn onschuldige uitgangspunt, maar ook de quasi-Fregeaanse remedie, ja zelfs alle beschikbare alternatieven, in strijd zijn met het genoemde axioma. *Externalisme sluit denoting uit*. Dat is volgens mijn exegese de uiterst belangwekkende en verrassende stelling die in het GEA wordt bewezen.

Het laatste *hoofdstuk V* handelt over de “fundamentele Frege”, d.w.z. Frege als vertegenwoordiger van opvattingen die *voorondersteld* zijn in zijn theorie over *Sinn* en *Bedeutung*. Welke rol heeft hij gespeeld in het proces dat uitloopt op de volledige acceptatie van de ToD? In OF §§56-57 verschijnt hij daadwerkelijk op het toneel. Teneinde de exegese van die nogal moeilijke passage voor te bereiden, worden drie factoren die samen de context bepalen, aan een nader onderzoek onderworpen. Het eerste element bestaat in wat is gebeurd in de voorafgaande passage: Russells conceptie van de ToD en zijn ontdekking dat die niet levensvatbaar is tenzij er een nieuwe visie op de variabele wordt uitgewerkt, een visie waarin de variabele niet langer geacht wordt het verwijzende begrip “willekeurig welke entiteit” (“*any entity*”) te vooronderstellen. De tweede factor bestaat in de beperking van Russells waarneming, een beperking die te wijten is aan zijn misverstand over het fundamentele verschil tussen Frege en hemzelf. Uiteraard kan de aard en de ernst van die misverstand niet worden vastgesteld,

tenzij ook nog een derde factor onderzocht wordt: het fundamentele verschil zelf.

Deze onderzoeken leiden tot de conclusie dat de door Frege geboden hulp bij het ontwerp van een nieuwe kijk op de variabele even problematisch is als het resultaat van die hulp. Verder wordt ook geconcludeerd dat de rol die Russell Frege heeft toegestaan te spelen in OD veel beperkter is dan die geweest had kunnen zijn. Frege had geëerd kunnen worden als voorloper van de nieuwe theorie van *indefinite descriptions* (onbepaalde beschrijvingen). Ten slotte komt uit dit onderzoek ook naar voren, dat noch de fundamentele verschillen tussen Russell en Frege, noch Russells misverstanden daarover, afbreuk doen aan de geldigheid van het GEA als uitmondend in een kritiek op Frege. In tegendeel: aldus opgevat is het GEA op z'n sterkst. Want een eventueel beroep op bijzondere *occurrences* is nog moeilijker te rijmen met de logica van Frege dan met die van Russell.

Echter, Russell was niet bereid het belang dat volgens dit proefschrift aan het GEA toekomt, namelijk dat daardoor het *axioma van uitwendig verschil* ontkracht wordt, volledig te erkennen. Volgens hem wordt door het GEA de logische onmogelijkheid van *denoting* bewezen. Desondanks lijkt de variabele zoiets als *denoting* toch te vooronderstellen. Dus, *als* de ToD volledig geaccepteerd moet worden, dan kan dat het beste gebeuren door *denoting* samen met Frege helemaal te vergeten. En dat is precies wat er in de uiteindelijke acceptatie van de ToD en het daarbij behorende officiële verhaal over haar ontstaansgeschiedenis gebeurd is!

Volgens de onderhavige analyse wilde Russell de ToD volledig accepteren toen hij in de gaten kreeg hoe die van dienst zou kunnen zijn om met de in 1901 ontdekte paradox in het reine te komen. Maar als het “probleem van *denoting*” op de hierboven geschetste manier wordt uitgelegd, namelijk als in wezen een probleem van externalisme, dan kan diezelfde procedure ook op de beroemde paradox worden toegepast. Wat op het eerste gezicht een “probleem van reflexiviteit” lijkt, blijkt dan in wezen een andere variant te zijn van het probleem van externalisme. Inderdaad, het axioma van uitwendig verschil loopt uit op de ontkenning van reflexiviteit. Want het subtiële verschil van zichzelf dat daarin voorondersteld is, wordt door dat axioma uitgesloten. Maar zodra dat axioma wordt losgelaten, is elk verschil van *meaning* terug te vinden op het vlak van de *denotation*. Dan is er wel degelijk een weg terug van *denotation* naar *meaning*, van de morgenster naar “de morgenster” bij voorbeeld. En dan wordt tevens duidelijk onder welke specifieke voorwaarde reflexiviteit vicieus wordt, namelijk wanneer die niet langer bestaat in iets dat van reflexiviteit en niet-reflexiviteit onderscheiden is. Op die manier blijkt er een onvermoede verwantschap tussen beide problemen te bestaan. Daarom verdient het in het GEA besproken probleem betiteld te worden als *Russells tweede paradox*.

Acknowledgements

The genesis of this book has been much more drawn-out than is usual in case of a dissertation. That is why the relief of its completion is greater than it might have been in more regular circumstances. That is also the reason why my gratitude towards those who have assisted me in this arduous process is extraordinary great, greater than I am able to express in a few words of circumstance.

First of all, I want to thank my supervisor and friend Göran Sundholm. He has witnessed, in a very cooperative spirit, my very first struggles with Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and with Frege. He has invited me again and again to present myself in the world of analytic philosophers. He has rescued me from total isolation. Without his interference, I would have been drowned in the sea of loneliness that separates continental from analytical philosophers. Göran has undauntedly provided the critical resistance that I needed even more than I was able to realize at that time. In 1990, when I started to pay serious attention to Russell, he helped me in finding my way through the literature on the Gray's Elegy Argument and in becoming aware of its historical importance.

I appreciate the stoicism with which Göran has accepted, in 2006, my decision to abandon the whole project. But I even more appreciate the enthusiasm with which he has welcomed my decision, made two and a half years later, to start it again. I am proud of having a supervisor who has been prepared to study very seriously my rather unorthodox ideas.

My second supervisor, Christoph Lüthy, played a quite different kind of role, the role of "technical supervisor" belonging to Radboud University and more in particular to our Department of the History of Philosophy. I am very grateful for the extremely kind, attentive and considerate way in which he has carried out this task. He has done much more than I could have hoped for. More in particular, I want to thank him for the considerable number of corrections of my English.

Three other members of our Faculty of Philosophy have contributed to making possible the actual defence of this thesis: Hans Thijssen, who, as Dean, enabled the whole procedure, Paul Bakker, who in a very friendly and bold way has acted behind the stage, and last but not least, Rob van der Sandt, who has taken the pains to act as Chair of the Manuscript Committee. I want to thank him, because I quite well realize that it must be far from easy to narrow the gap between his approach and mine, given the fact that I failed to make a serious attempt in the other direction.

I equally want to thank the other two members of the Manuscript Committee: Wim de Jong and Graham Stevens. Without the latter's tenacity

in opposing my views on Russell and Meinong, the article on which the second chapter of this dissertation is based, would never have been written. I am grateful for Graham's enthusiastic support and youthful open-mindedness.

Among those who hold office in the graduation ceremony, the so-called "paranimfen" seem to be of lowest rank. In my case, however, they have both been of great importance. By means of his extraordinary steadfast trust in a positive outcome, Frank Verdonk has helped me more than he might have realized. Michiel Seevinck, in turn, has acted as my guardian angel. I do not know how to thank him for all his coaching and encouragement. Without his wonderful capacity to combine practical with psychological assistance, this dissertation would never have been completed. I want to thank Michiel in particular for his valuable comments on my summary. He has been as a father for me, a father much younger than his own "son".

For his generous offer to take care of the outer appearance of this thesis and for the way he has done so, I am very grateful to Roel Elbers. I also want to thank others who have helped me in facing my inner conflict. Without the exceptionally accepting approach of Rob Gras, I would never have vindicated my outward insecurity. In the past, several dear friends, namely Albrecht Kwast, Yolande Zelders and Ad Vennix, have coached me without any palpable result. I honestly believe that they all have contributed to the completion of what, at that time, seemed to be an interminable process.

Finally I want to thank three dear and near ones: firstly my brother Ido, who once, long ago, pushed me on the road towards philosophy and ever since has always witnessed my development with exceptional interest and understanding. Secondly I want to thank my sister in law Andrée, who never stopped encouraging me to complete what had been left uncompleted. Above all, I am grateful to my wife Agnes, my critical, loving and beloved angel. I want to thank her for all the work she has done during the last months and during all those many years before! But in my hart, I am most thankful for her invisible work.

Curriculum Vitae

Harm Boukema was born in Delft, in 1945. He studied Mathematics, Physics, Astronomy and Philosophy at Utrecht University and subsequently pursued Philosophy and Mathematics at the University of Amsterdam. From the very start, he longed for modes of thought that might enable him to put the sciences into perspective. As a consequence, he got interested in the Aristotelian tradition, in phenomenology, existentialism and dialectics. After having worked for one year at the Technical University Twente, he was appointed assistant to the Hegelian philosopher Jan Hollak, who at that time occupied the chair of History of Modern Philosophy at the University of Nijmegen. Boukema has remained at that University ever since, remaining faithful, both in teachings and in research, to his deep interest in the role of the sciences in the development of modern thought. He has tried to broaden his perspective by paying attention to a *variety* of very specific issues.

Some years after his appointment, Harm Boukema, who had moved from mathematics towards philosophical heroes who were rather distant from the sciences, felt the need for opponents. That is why he came to focus on analytical philosophers. He extensively studied and criticized Austin's speech act theory and Wittgenstein's famous remarks on "family resemblances". In his attempt to understand the background of these remarks, he discovered Wittgenstein's unsuspected spirituality. It had a great impact on his subsequent philosophical development and on his view of the history of modern philosophy. Nevertheless, he never became an adherent of Wittgenstein's *theories*.

Trying to understand the point of departure for Wittgenstein's early philosophy, he critically studied Frege and finally came across Russell, who surprised him in revealing a quite different, much less gloomy, kind of spirituality. It is from this encounter that the present thesis has eventually resulted.

Stellingen

bij het proefschrift *Russell's Second Paradox* van Harm Boukema

1. Het gaat niet vanzelf goed, maar als het goed gaat, gaat het vanzelf.
2. De scherpste kritiek is ontwapenend.
3. Vanwege hun universele betekenis zijn tegenstellingen intiemer met de filosofie verbonden dan woorden.
4. Anti-psychologisme op het gebied van de Logica heeft als logische consequentie, dat logische *problemen* psychologisch en existentieel van aard moeten zijn.
5. Wat zijn visie op wetenschap en mystiek betreft is Russell wetenschappelijker en mystieker ingesteld dan Wittgenstein.
6. De manier waarop Russell zich tegen Leibniz heeft afgezet, is voor de aard van zijn verdere filosofische ontwikkeling van veel groter belang dan gewoonlijk, ook door hemzelf, is aangenomen.
7. Naast het door Landini (1998), p.73 genoemde en door Makin (2000) gerespecteerde uitgangspunt dat volgens Russell elk concept, en dus ook elk *denoting* concept, als entiteit moet kunnen voorkomen (zie subsectie 9.2 van dit proefschrift), zijn voor een goed begrip van het *Gray's Elegy Argument* nog drie andere punten van even groot belang, namelijk:
 - a) dat de zin *This happens as follows* de scheidslijn markeert tussen twee tegengestelde versies van één en hetzelfde, tweezijdige probleem
 - b) dat in alinea D vertrokken wordt vanuit een zienswijze die als zodanig niet in *Principles* is terug te vinden
 - c) dat de vermeende afwezigheid van een weg terug van *denotation* naar *meaning* berust op het axioma van extern verschil.
8. Gezien het feit dat de auteur van dit proefschrift het axioma van extern verschil verwerpt, huldigt hij hoogstwaarschijnlijk de opvatting dat het oordeel "De Morgenster is niet iets anders dan de Avondster" alleen dan een zakelijke, astronomische kenniswaarde kan hebben, wanneer daarin is voorondersteld dat er tussen de Morgenster en de Avondster

een zakelijk, *astronomisch* verschil bestaat, een anders-zijn dat numerieke identiteit niet uitsluit.

9. Wittgensteins vaak geroemde beschouwing over “familiegelijkenissen” leidt aan het euvel van tegenstellingblindheid. Terecht wijst hij er op dat bij voorbeeld competitie slechts voor sommige spelen van essentieel belang is, maar hij vergeet het omgekeerde, namelijk dat slechts sommige vormen van competitie een speels karakter hebben.
10. Austins stelregel dat in de filosofie de gewone taal niet misbruikt kan worden zonder daarvoor een prijs te betalen, is ook op zijn eigen taaldaadtheorie van toepassing. Alle technische groundbegrippen daarvan ontleen hun kracht aan de tegenstelling tussen “zeggen” en “doen”. Die tegenstelling wordt door hem echter stelselmatig vervormd tot een territoriumverdeling.
11. Machtsverheffen is voor het wezen van de getallen van veel groter belang dan gewoonlijk, ook door wiskundigen, wordt aangenomen. Bij voorbeeld: restklassen modulo m zijn slechts quasigetallen omdat ze niet als exponent kunnen fungeren.
12. Op een eenvoudige wijze kan een meetkundige stelling worden bewezen die buiten het bestek valt van de gangbare meetkunde en waardoor de gulden snede in een ruimer perspectief wordt geplaatst, namelijk dat er vier en slechts vier typen gelijkbenige driehoeken zijn die door één deellijn in twee eveneens gelijkbenige driehoeken kunnen worden verdeeld. Slechts twee van deze typen vertonen de verhouding van de gulden snede.
13. Het verdient aanbeveling de vraag of God bestaat, te vervangen door de vraag *wat* voor god wel of niet bestaat.
14. Rechtvaardiging van geloof of ongeloof berust op bijgeloof.
15. Omdat het niet zeker is of er in het hiernamaals gepromoveerd kan worden, is het aan te raden, als je wilt promoveren, dat te doen voor de dood is ingetreden.

II.—ON DENOTING.

BY BERTRAND RUSSELL.

- 1 By a "denoting phrase" I mean a phrase such as any one of the following: a man, some man, any man, every man, all men, the present King of England, the present King of France, the centre of mass of the Solar System at the first instant of the twentieth century, the revolution of the earth round the sun, the revolution of the sun round the earth. Thus a phrase is denoting solely in virtue of its *form*. We may distinguish three cases: (1) A phrase may be denoting, and yet not denote anything; *e.g.*, "the present King of France". (2) A phrase may denote one definite object; *e.g.*, "the present King of England" denotes a certain man. (3) A phrase may denote ambiguously; *e.g.*, "a man" denotes not many men, but an ambiguous man. The interpretation of such phrases is a matter of considerable difficulty; indeed, it is very hard to frame any theory not susceptible of formal refutation. All the difficulties with which I am acquainted are met, so far as I can discover, by the theory which I am about to explain.
- 2 The subject of denoting is of very great importance, not only in logic and mathematics, but also in theory of knowledge. For example, we know that the centre of mass of the Solar System at a definite instant is some definite point, and we can affirm a number of propositions about it; but we have no immediate *acquaintance* with this point, which is only known to us by description. The distinction between *acquaintance* and *knowledge about* is the distinction between the things we have presentations of, and the things we only reach by means of denoting phrases. It often happens that we know that a certain phrase denotes unambiguously, although we have no acquaintance with what it denotes; this occurs in the above case of the centre of mass. In perception we have acquaintance with the objects of perception, and in thought we have acquaintance with objects of a more abstract logical character; but we do not necessarily have acquaintance with the objects denoted by phrases composed

of words with whose meanings we are acquainted. To take a very important instance: There seems no reason to believe that we are ever acquainted with other people's minds, seeing that these are not directly perceived; hence what we know about them is obtained through denoting. All thinking has to start from acquaintance; but it succeeds in thinking *about* many things with which we have no acquaintance.

- 3 The course of my argument will be as follows. I shall begin by stating the theory I intend to advocate;¹ I shall then discuss the theories of Frege and Meinong, showing why neither of them satisfies me; then I shall give the grounds in favour of my theory; and finally I shall briefly indicate the philosophical consequences of my theory.

- 4 My theory, briefly, is as follows. I take the notion of the *variable* as fundamental; I use " $C(x)$ " to mean a proposition² in which x is a constituent, where x , the variable, is essentially and wholly undetermined. Then we can consider the two notions " $C(x)$ is always true" and " $C(x)$ is sometimes true".³ Then *everything* and *nothing* and *something* (which are the most primitive of denoting phrases) are to be interpreted as follows:—

C (everything) means " $C(x)$ is always true";

C (nothing) means "' $C(x)$ is false' is always true";

C (something) means "It is false that ' $C(x)$ is false' is always true".⁴

Here the notion " $C(x)$ is always true" is taken as ultimate and indefinable, and the others are defined by means of it. *Everything*, *nothing*, and *something*, are not assumed to have any meaning in isolation, but a meaning is assigned to *every* proposition in which they occur. This is the principle of the theory of denoting I wish to advocate: that denoting phrases never have any meaning in themselves, but that every proposition in whose verbal expression they occur has a meaning. The difficulties concerning denoting are, I believe, all the result of a wrong analysis of propositions whose verbal expressions contain denoting phrases. The proper analysis, if I am not mistaken, may be further set forth as follows.

¹ I have discussed this subject in *Principles of Mathematics*, chapter v., and § 476. The theory there advocated is very nearly the same as Frege's, and is quite different from the theory to be advocated in what follows.

² More exactly, a propositional function.

³ The second of these can be defined by means of the first, if we take it to mean, "It is not true that ' $C(x)$ is false' is always true".

⁴ I shall sometimes use, instead of this complicated phrase, the phrase " $C(x)$ is not always false," or " $C(x)$ is sometimes true," supposed *defined* to mean the same as the complicated phrase.

- 5 Suppose now we wish to interpret the proposition, "I met a man". If this is true, I met some definite man; but that is not what I affirm. What I affirm is, according to the theory I advocate:—

"'I met x , and x is human' is not always false".

Generally, defining the class of men as the class of objects having the predicate *human*, we say that:—

"C (a man)" means "'C (x) and x is human' is not always false".

This leaves "a man," by itself, wholly destitute of meaning, but gives a meaning to every proposition in whose verbal expression "a man" occurs.

- 6 Consider next the proposition "all men are mortal". This proposition¹ is really hypothetical and states that *if* anything is a man, it is mortal. That is, it states that if x is a man, x is mortal, whatever x may be. Hence, substituting ' x is human' for ' x is a man,' we find:—

"All men are mortal" means "'If x is human, x is mortal' is always true".

This is what is expressed in symbolic logic by saying that "all men are mortal" means "' x is human' implies ' x is mortal' for all values of x ". More generally, we say:—

"C (all men)" means "'If x is human, then C (x) is true' is always true".

Similarly

"C (no men)" means "'If x is human, then C (x) is false' is always true".

"C (some men)" will mean the same as "C (a man),"² and

"C (a man)" means "It is false that 'C (x) and x is human' is always false".

"C (every man)" will mean the same as "C (all men)".

- 7 It remains to interpret phrases containing *the*. These are by far the most interesting and difficult of denoting phrases. Take as an instance "the father of Charles II. was executed". This asserts that there was an x who was the father of Charles II. and was executed. Now *the*, when it is strictly used, involves uniqueness; we do, it is true, speak of "*the* son of So-and-so" even when So-and-so has several sons, but it would be more correct to say "*a* son of So-and-so". Thus for our purposes we take *the* as involving uniqueness. Thus when we say " x was *the* father of Charles II." we not only assert that x had a certain relation to Charles II., but also

¹ As has been ably argued in Mr. Bradley's *Logic*, book i., chap. ii.

² Psychologically "C (a man)" has a suggestion of *only one*, and "C (some men)" has a suggestion of *more than one*; but we may neglect these suggestions in a preliminary sketch.

that nothing else had this relation. The relation in question, without the assumption of uniqueness, and without any denoting phrases, is expressed by " x begat Charles II." To get an equivalent of " x was the father of Charles II.," we must add, "If y is other than x , y did not beget Charles II.," or, what is equivalent, "If y begat Charles II., y is identical with x ". Hence " x is the father of Charles II." becomes " x begat Charles II.; and 'if y begat Charles II., y is identical with x ' is always true of y ".

Thus "the father of Charles II. was executed" becomes:—
 "It is not always false of x that x begat Charles II. and that x was executed and that 'if y begat Charles II., y is identical with x ' is always true of y ".

This may seem a somewhat incredible interpretation; but I am not at present giving reasons, I am merely *stating* the theory.

- 8 To interpret "C (the father of Charles II.)," where C stands for any statement about him, we have only to substitute C (x) for " x was executed" in the above. Observe that, according to the above interpretation, whatever statement C may be, "C (the father of Charles II.)" implies:—
 "It is not always false of x that 'if y begat Charles II., y is identical with x ' is always true of y ,"

which is what is expressed in common language by "Charles II. had one father and no more". Consequently if this condition fails, *every* proposition of the form "C (the father of Charles II.)" is false. Thus *e.g.* every proposition of the form "C (the present King of France)" is false. This is a great advantage in the present theory. I shall show later that it is not contrary to the law of contradiction, as might be at first supposed.

- 9 The above gives a reduction of all propositions in which denoting phrases occur to forms in which no such phrases occur. Why it is imperative to effect such a reduction, the subsequent discussion will endeavour to show.

- 10 The evidence for the above theory is derived from the difficulties which seem unavoidable if we regard denoting phrases as standing for genuine constituents of the propositions in whose verbal expressions they occur. Of the possible theories which admit such constituents the simplest is that of Meinong.¹ This theory regards any grammatically correct denoting phrase as standing for an *object*. Thus "the present King of France," "the round square," etc., are

¹ See *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie*, Leipzig, 1904, the first three articles (by Meinong, Ameseder and Mally respectively).

supposed to be genuine objects. It is admitted that such objects do not *subsist*, but nevertheless they are supposed to be objects. This is in itself a difficult view; but the chief objection is that such objects, admittedly, are apt to infringe the law of contradiction. It is contended, for example, that the existent present King of France exists, and also does not exist; that the round square is round, and also not round; etc. But this is intolerable; and if any theory can be found to avoid this result, it is surely to be preferred.

- 11 The above breach of the law of contradiction is avoided by Frege's theory. He distinguishes, in a denoting phrase, two elements, which we may call the *meaning* and the *denotation*.¹ Thus "the centre of mass of the Solar System at the beginning of the twentieth century" is highly complex in *meaning*, but its *denotation* is a certain point, which is simple. The Solar System, the twentieth century, etc., are constituents of the *meaning*; but the *denotation* has no constituents at all.² One advantage of this distinction is that it shows why it is often worth while to assert identity. If we say "Scott is the author of *Waverley*," we assert an identity of denotation with a difference of meaning. I shall, however, not repeat the grounds in favour of this theory, as I have urged its claims elsewhere (*loc. cit.*), and am now concerned to dispute those claims.

- 12 One of the first difficulties that confront us, when we adopt the view that denoting phrases *express* a meaning and *denote* a denotation,³ concerns the cases in which the denotation appears to be absent. If we say "the King of England is bald," that is, it would seem, not a statement about the complex *meaning* "the King of England," but about the actual man denoted by the meaning. But now consider "the King of France is bald". By parity of form, this also ought to be about the denotation of the phrase "the King of France". But this phrase, though it has a *meaning* provided

¹ See his "Ueber Sinn und Bedeutung," *Zeitschrift für Phil. und Phil. Kritik*, vol. 100.

² Frege distinguishes the two elements of meaning and denotation everywhere, and not only in complex denoting phrases. Thus it is the *meanings* of the constituents of a denoting complex that enter into its *meaning*, not their *denotation*. In the proposition "Mont Blanc is over 1,000 metres high," it is, according to him, the *meaning* of "Mont Blanc," not the actual mountain, that is a constituent of the *meaning* of the proposition.

³ In this theory, we shall say that the denoting phrase *expresses* a meaning; and we shall say both of the phrase and of the meaning that they *denote* a denotation. In the other theory, which I advocate, there is no *meaning*, and only sometimes a *denotation*.

"the King of England" has a meaning, has certainly no denotation, at least in any obvious sense. Hence one would suppose that "the King of France is bald" ought to be nonsense; but it is not nonsense, since it is plainly false. Or again consider such a proposition as the following: "If u is a class which has only one member, then that one member is a member of u ," or, as we may state it, "If u is a unit class, *the* u is a u ". This proposition ought to be *always* true, since the conclusion is true whenever the hypothesis is true. But "the u " is a denoting phrase, and it is the denotation, not the meaning, that is said to be a u . Now if u is *not* a unit class, "the u " seems to denote nothing; hence our proposition would seem to become nonsense as soon as u is not a unit class.

- 13 Now it is plain that such propositions do *not* become nonsense merely because their hypotheses are false. The King in "The Tempest" might say, "If Ferdinand is not drowned, Ferdinand is my only son". Now "my only son" is a denoting phrase, which, on the face of it, has a denotation when, and only when, I have exactly one son. But the above statement would nevertheless have remained true if Ferdinand had been in fact drowned. Thus we must either provide a denotation in cases in which it is at first sight absent, or we must abandon the view that the denotation is what is concerned in propositions which contain denoting phrases. The latter is the course that I advocate. The former course may be taken, as by Meinong, by admitting objects which do not subsist, and denying that they obey the law of contradiction; this, however, is to be avoided if possible. Another way of taking the same course (so far as our present alternative is concerned) is adopted by Frege, who provides by definition some purely conventional denotation for the cases in which otherwise there would be none. Thus "the King of France," is to denote the null-class; "the only son of Mr. So-and-so" (who has a fine family of ten), is to denote the class of all his sons; and so on. But this procedure, though it may not lead to actual logical error, is plainly artificial, and does not give an exact analysis of the matter. Thus if we allow that denoting phrases, in general, have the two sides of meaning and denotation, the cases where there seems to be no denotation cause difficulties both on the assumption that there really is a denotation and on the assumption that there really is none.

- 14 A logical theory may be tested by its capacity for dealing with puzzles, and it is a wholesome plan, in thinking about logic, to stock the mind with as many puzzles as possible,

since these serve much the same purpose as is served by experiments in physical science. I shall therefore state three puzzles which a theory as to denoting ought to be able to solve; and I shall show later that my theory solves them.

- 15 (1) If *a* is identical with *b*, whatever is true of the one is true of the other, and either may be substituted for the other in any proposition without altering the truth or falsehood of that proposition. Now George IV. wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley*; and in fact Scott *was* the author of *Waverley*. Hence we may substitute *Scott* for the author of "*Waverley*," and thereby prove that George IV. wished to know whether Scott was Scott. Yet an interest in the law of identity can hardly be attributed to the first gentleman of Europe.

- 16 (2) By the law of excluded middle, either "A is B" or "A is not B" must be true. Hence either "the present King of France is bald" or "the present King of France is not bald" must be true. Yet if we enumerated the things that are bald, and then the things that are not bald, we should not find the present King of France in either list. Hegelians, who love a synthesis, will probably conclude that he wears a wig.

- 17 (3) Consider the proposition "A differs from B". If this is true, there is a difference between A and B, which fact may be expressed in the form "the difference between A and B subsists". But if it is false that A differs from B, then there is no difference between A and B, which fact may be expressed in the form "the difference between A and B does not subsist". But how can a non-entity be the subject of a proposition? "I think, therefore I am" is no more evident than "I am the subject of a proposition, therefore I am," provided "I am" is taken to assert subsistence or being,¹ not existence. Hence, it would appear, it must always be self-contradictory to deny the being of anything; but we have seen, in connexion with Meinong, that to admit being also sometimes leads to contradictions. Thus if A and B do not differ, to suppose either that there is, or that there is not, such an object as "the difference between A and B" seems equally impossible.

- (A) 18 The relation of the meaning to the denotation involves certain rather curious difficulties, which seem in themselves sufficient to prove that the theory which leads to such difficulties must be wrong.

- (B) 19 When we wish to speak about the *meaning* of a denoting

¹ I use these as synonyms.

phrase, as opposed to its *denotation*, the natural mode of doing so is by inverted commas. Thus we say:—

The centre of mass of the Solar System is a point, not a denoting complex;

“The centre of mass of the Solar System” is a denoting complex, not a point.

Or again,

The first line of Gray's Elegy states a proposition.

“The first line of Gray's Elegy” does not state a proposition. Thus taking any denoting phrase, say C, we wish to consider the relation between C and “C,” where the difference of the two is of the kind exemplified in the above two instances.

(C) 20 We say, to begin with, that when C occurs it is the *denotation* that we are speaking about; but when “C” occurs, it is the *meaning*. Now the relation of meaning and denotation is not merely linguistic through the phrase: there must be a logical relation involved, which we express by saying that the meaning denotes the denotation. But the difficulty which confronts us is that we cannot succeed in *both* preserving the connexion of meaning and denotation *and* preventing them from being one and the same; also that the meaning cannot be got at except by means of denoting phrases. This happens as follows.

(D) 21 The one phrase C was to have both meaning and denotation. But if we speak of “the meaning of C,” that gives us the meaning (if any) of the denotation. “The meaning of the first line of Gray's Elegy” is the same as “The meaning of ‘The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,’” and is not the same as “The meaning of ‘the first line of Gray's Elegy’”. Thus in order to get the meaning we want, we must speak not of “the meaning of C,” but of “the meaning of ‘C,’” which is the same as “C” by itself. Similarly “the denotation of C” does not mean the denotation we want, but means something which, if it denotes at all, denotes what is denoted by the denotation we want. For example, let “C” be “the denoting complex occurring in the second of the above instances”. Then

C = “the first line of Gray's Elegy,” and
the denotation of C = The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.
But what we *meant* to have as the denotation was “the first line of Gray's Elegy”. Thus we have failed to get what we wanted.

(E) 22 The difficulty in speaking of the meaning of a denoting complex may be stated thus: The moment we put the complex in a proposition, the proposition is about the denotation;

and if we make a proposition in which the subject is "the meaning of C," then the subject is the meaning (if any) of the denotation, which was not intended. This leads us to say that, when we distinguish meaning and denotation, we must be dealing with the meaning: the meaning has denotation and is a complex, and there is not something other than the meaning, which can be called the complex, and be said to *have* both meaning and denotation. The right phrase, on the view in question, is that some meanings have denotations.

- (F) 23 But this only makes our difficulty in speaking of meanings more evident. For suppose C is our complex; then we are to say that C is the meaning of the complex. Nevertheless, whenever C occurs without inverted commas, what is said is not true of the meaning, but only of the denotation, as when we say: The centre of mass of the Solar System is a point. Thus to speak of C itself, *i.e.*, to make a proposition about the meaning, our subject must not be C, but something which denotes C. Thus "C," which is what we use when we want to speak of the meaning, must be not the meaning, but something which denotes the meaning. And C must not be a constituent of this complex (as it is of "the meaning of C"); for if C occurs in the complex, it will be its denotation, not its meaning, that will occur, and there is no backward road from denotations to meanings, because every object can be denoted by an infinite number of different denoting phrases.

- (G) 24 Thus it would seem that "C" and C are different entities, such that "C" denotes C; but this cannot be an explanation, because the relation of "C" to C remains wholly mysterious; and where are we to find the denoting complex "C" which is to denote C? Moreover, when C occurs in a proposition, it is not *only* the denotation that occurs (as we shall see in the next paragraph); yet, on the view in question, C is only the denotation, the meaning being wholly relegated to "C". This is an inextricable tangle, and seems to prove that the whole distinction of meaning and denotation has been wrongly conceived.

- (H) 25 That the meaning is relevant when a denoting phrase occurs in a proposition is formally proved by the puzzle about the author of *Waverley*. The proposition "Scott was the author of *Waverley*" has a property not possessed by "Scott was Scott," namely the property that George IV. wished to know whether it was true. Thus the two are not identical propositions; hence the meaning of "the author of *Waverley*" must be relevant as well as the denotation, if we adhere to the point of view to which this distinction belongs.

Yet, as we have just seen, so long as we adhere to this point of view, we are compelled to hold that only the denotation can be relevant. Thus the point of view in question must be abandoned.

26 It remains to show how all the puzzles we have been considering are solved by the theory explained at the beginning of this article.

27 According to the view which I advocate, a denoting phrase is essentially *part* of a sentence, and does not, like most single words, have any significance on its own account. If I say "Scott was a man," that is a statement of the form " x was a man," and it has "Scott" for its subject. But if I say "the author of *Waverley* was a man," that is not a statement of the form " x was a man," and does not have "the author of *Waverley*" for its subject. Abbreviating the statement made at the beginning of this article, we may put, in place of "the author of *Waverley* was a man," the following: "One and only one entity wrote *Waverley*, and that one was a man". (This is not so strictly what is meant as what was said earlier; but it is easier to follow.) And speaking generally, suppose we wish to say that the author of *Waverley* had the property ϕ , what we wish to say is equivalent to "One and only one entity wrote *Waverley*, and that one had the property ϕ ".

28 The explanation of *denotation* is now as follows. Every proposition in which "the author of *Waverley*" occurs being explained as above, the proposition "Scott was the author of *Waverley*" (i.e. "Scott was identical with the author of *Waverley*") becomes "One and only one entity wrote *Waverley*, and Scott was identical with that one"; or, reverting to the wholly explicit form: "It is not always false of x that x wrote *Waverley*, that it is always true of y that if y wrote *Waverley* y is identical with x , and that Scott is identical with x ". Thus if "C" is a denoting phrase, it may happen that there is one entity x (there cannot be more than one) for which the proposition " x is identical with C" is true, this proposition being interpreted as above. We may then say that the entity x is the denotation of the phrase "C". Thus Scott is the denotation of "the author of *Waverley*". The "C" in inverted commas will be merely the *phrase*, not anything that can be called the *meaning*. The phrase *per se* has no meaning, because in any proposition in which it occurs the proposition, fully expressed, does not contain the phrase, which has been broken up.

29 The puzzle about George IV.'s curiosity is now seen to have a very simple solution. The proposition "Scott was

the author of *Waverley*," which was written out in its unabbreviated form in the preceding paragraph, does not contain any constituent "the author of *Waverley*" for which we could substitute "Scott". This does not interfere with the truth of inferences resulting from making what is *verbally* the substitution of "Scott" for "the author of *Waverley*," so long as "the author of *Waverley*" has what I call a *primary* occurrence in the proposition considered. The difference of primary and secondary occurrences of denoting phrases is as follows:—

30

When we say: "George IV. wished to know whether so-and-so," or when we say "So-and-so is surprising" or "So-and-so is true," etc., the "so-and-so" must be a proposition. Suppose now that "so-and-so" contains a denoting phrase. We may either eliminate this denoting phrase from the subordinate proposition "so-and-so," or from the whole proposition in which "so-and-so" is a mere constituent. Different propositions result according to which we do. I have heard of a touchy owner of a yacht to whom a guest, on first seeing it, remarked, "I thought your yacht was larger than it is"; and the owner replied, "No, my yacht is not larger than it is". What the guest meant was, "The size that I thought your yacht was is greater than the size your yacht is"; the meaning attributed to him is, "I thought the size of your yacht was greater than the size of your yacht". To return to George IV. and *Waverley*, when we say, "George IV. wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley*," we normally mean "George IV. wished to know whether one and only one man wrote *Waverley* and Scott was that man"; but we *may* also mean: "One and only one man wrote *Waverley*, and George IV. wished to know whether Scott was that man". In the latter, "the author of *Waverley*" has a *primary* occurrence; in the former, a *secondary*. The latter might be expressed by "George IV. wished to know, concerning the man who in fact wrote *Waverley*, whether he was Scott". This would be true, for example, if George IV. had seen Scott at a distance, and had asked "Is that Scott?" A *secondary* occurrence of a denoting phrase may be defined as one in which the phrase occurs in a proposition *p* which is a mere constituent of the proposition we are considering, and the substitution for the denoting phrase is to be effected in *p*, not in the whole proposition concerned. The ambiguity as between primary and secondary occurrences is hard to avoid in language; but it does no harm if we are on our guard against it. In symbolic logic it is of course easily avoided.

31 The distinction of primary and secondary occurrences also enables us to deal with the question whether the present King of France is bald or not bald, and generally with the logical status of denoting phrases that denote nothing. If "C" is a denoting phrase, say "the term having the property F," then

"C has the property ϕ " means "one and only one term has the property F, and that one has the property ϕ ".¹

If now the property F belongs to no terms, or to several, it follows that "C has the property ϕ " is false for *all* values of ϕ . Thus "the present King of France is bald" is certainly false; and "the present King of France is not bald" is false if it means

"There is an entity which is now King of France and is not bald,"

but is true if it means

"It is false that there is an entity which is now King of France and is bald".

That is, "the King of France is not bald" is false if the occurrence of "the King of France" is *primary*, and true if it is *secondary*. Thus all propositions in which "the King of France" has a primary occurrence are false; the denials of such propositions are true, but in them "the King of France" has a secondary occurrence. Thus we escape the conclusion that the King of France has a wig.

32 We can now see also how to deny that there is such an object as the difference between A and B in the case when A and B do not differ. If A and B do differ, there is one and only one entity x such that " x is the difference between A and B" is a true proposition; if A and B do not differ, there is no such entity x . Thus according to the meaning of denotation lately explained, "the difference between A and B" has a denotation when A and B differ, but not otherwise. This difference applies to true and false propositions generally. If " $a R b$ " stands for " a has the relation R to b ," then when $a R b$ is true, there is such an entity as the relation R between a and b ; when $a R b$ is false, there is no such entity. Thus out of any proposition we can make a denoting phrase, which denotes an entity if the proposition is true, but does not denote an entity if the proposition is false. *E.g.*, it is true (at least we will suppose so) that the earth revolves round the sun, and false that the sun revolves round the earth; hence "the revolution of the earth round the sun" denotes an

¹ This is the abbreviated, not the stricter, interpretation.

entity, while "the revolution of the sun round the earth" does not denote an entity.¹

- 33 The whole realm of non-entities, such as "the round square," "the even prime other than 2," "Apollo," "Hamlet," etc., can now be satisfactorily dealt with. All these are denoting phrases which do not denote anything. A proposition about Apollo means what we get by substituting what the classical dictionary tells us is meant by Apollo, say "the sun-god". All propositions in which Apollo occurs are to be interpreted by the above rules for denoting phrases. If "Apollo" has a primary occurrence, the proposition containing the occurrence is false; if the occurrence is secondary, the proposition may be true. So again "the round square is round" means "there is one and only one entity x which is round and square, and that entity is round," which is a false proposition, not, as Meinong maintains, a true one. "The most perfect Being has all perfections; existence is a perfection; therefore the most perfect Being exists" becomes:—

"There is one and only one entity x which is most perfect; that one has all perfections; existence is a perfection; therefore that one exists". As a proof, this fails for want of a proof of the premiss "there is one and only one entity x which is most perfect".²

- 34 Mr. MacColl (MIND, N.S., No. 54, and again No. 55, p. 401) regards individuals as of two sorts, real and unreal; hence he defines the null-class as the class consisting of all unreal individuals. This assumes that such phrases as "the present King of France," which do not denote a real individual, do, nevertheless, denote an individual, but an unreal one. This is essentially Meinong's theory, which we have seen reason to reject because it conflicts with the law of contradiction. With our theory of denoting, we are able to hold that there are no unreal individuals; so that the null-class is the class containing no members, not the class containing as members all unreal individuals.

- 35 It is important to observe the effect of our theory on the interpretation of definitions which proceed by means of de-

¹ The propositions from which such entities are derived are not identical either with these entities or with the propositions that these entities have being.

² The argument can be made to prove validly that all members of the class of most perfect Beings exist; it can also be proved formally that this class cannot have *more* than one member; but, taking the definition of perfection as possession of all positive predicates, it can be proved almost equally formally that the class does not have even one member.

noting phrases. Most mathematical definitions are of this sort : for example, " $m-n$ means the number which, added to n , gives m ". Thus $m-n$ is defined as meaning the same as a certain denoting phrase ; but we agreed that denoting phrases have no meaning in isolation. Thus what the definition really ought to be is : "Any proposition containing $m-n$ is to mean the proposition which results from substituting for ' $m-n$ ' 'the number which, added to n , gives m '". The resulting proposition is interpreted according to the rules already given for interpreting propositions whose verbal expression contains a denoting phrase. In the case where m and n are such that there is one and only one number x which, added to n , gives m , there is a number x which can be substituted for $m-n$ in any proposition containing $m-n$ without altering the truth or falsehood of the proposition. But in other cases, all propositions in which " $m-n$ " has a primary occurrence are false.

36 The usefulness of *identity* is explained by the above theory. No one outside a logic-book ever wishes to say " x is x ," and yet assertions of identity are often made in such forms as "Scott was the author of *Waverley*" or "thou art the man". The meaning of such propositions cannot be stated without the notion of identity, although they are not simply statements that Scott is identical with another term, the author of *Waverley*, or that thou art identical with another term, the man. The shortest statement of "Scott is the author of *Waverley*" seems to be : "Scott wrote *Waverley* ; and it is always true of y that if y wrote *Waverley*, y is identical with Scott". It is in this way that identity enters into "Scott is the author of *Waverley*" ; and it is owing to such uses that identity is worth affirming.

37 One interesting result of the above theory of denoting is this : when there is anything with which we do not have immediate acquaintance, but only definition by denoting phrases, then the propositions in which this thing is introduced by means of a denoting phrase do not really contain this thing as a constituent, but contain instead the constituents expressed by the several words of the denoting phrase. Thus in every proposition that we can apprehend (*i.e.* not only in those whose truth or falsehood we can judge of, but in all that we can think about), all the constituents are really entities with which we have immediate acquaintance. Now such things as matter (in the sense in which matter occurs in physics) and the minds of other people are known to us only by denoting phrases, *i.e.*, we are not *acquainted* with them, but we know them as what has such and such proper-

ties. Hence, although we can form propositional functions $C(x)$ which must hold of such and such a material particle, or of So-and-so's mind, yet we are not acquainted with the propositions which affirm these things that we know must be true, because we cannot apprehend the actual entities concerned. What we know is "So-and-so has a mind which has such and such properties" but we do not know "A has such and such properties," where A is the mind in question. In such a case, we know the properties of a thing without having acquaintance with the thing itself, and without, consequently, knowing any single proposition of which the thing itself is a constituent.

38 Of the many other consequences of the view I have been advocating, I will say nothing. I will only beg the reader not to make up his mind against the view—as he might be tempted to do, on account of its apparently excessive complication—until he has attempted to construct a theory of his own on the subject of denotation. This attempt, I believe, will convince him that, whatever the true theory may be, it cannot have such a simplicity as one might have expected beforehand.

